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A short history of France from Caeser's invasion to the battle of

A
Short History of France

From Cæsar's Invasion to the Battle of Waterloo

By

Mary Duclaux
(A. Mary F. Robinson)

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With Maps

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"Reges regnant suffragio populorum."—MILON DE DORMANS.

"Tere de France, mult estes dulz païs."—*Chanson de Roland.*

> "Le Gaulois semble au saule verdissant;
> Plus on le coupe et plus il est naissant,
> Et rejetonne en branches davantage,
> Prenant vigueur de son propre dommage."
>
> RONSARD.

"Toute la suite des hommes pendant le cours des siècles doit être considérée comme un même homme qui subsiste toujours, et qui apprend continuellement."—PASCAL.

"La France éternelle."—VICTOR HUGO.

FOREWORD

I HAVE written this little book, having in my mind's eye neither schoolboys nor historians, though I should indeed be proud if one and the other gave it their approval; but I had in view the class of cultivated and ignorant men and women to which I myself belong, and meant to offer them such a book as I wish some one would write for me about Russia or Rumania or Serbia or even the United States. For thirty years and more the history of France has been my hobby, and I have read a good deal more of it than I have quoted; I have a fair library, and access to the hospitable bookshelves of my friends; —it seemed to me, therefore, that I was cut out for this particular form of war-work.

Of course, my little book is far from complete—partly on purpose; I have some qualms about a chapter on Philippe-le-Bel which I deliberately sacrificed because he seemed to me too prominent a personage to stand so far back. I have tried above all for unity, and to give a complete impression—the distance left in mass while the figures nearer our own times stand out in fuller relief.

So far as it goes, I hope it is accurate. The picture might be better, yet the painter has taken great pains, out of love and infinite respect for her two countries, the two great countries of Europe.

PARIS,
November, 1917.

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PART I

THE ROMAN TRADITION

"En toute chose, considérez les origines."—ERNEST RENAN.
"Look to the roots of thing."—ERNEST RENAN.

CHAPTER I

THE ROMANS IN GAUL

"Gallia duas res industriosissime persequitur, rem militarem et arguti loqui."—M. Porcius Caton, *Origines*, lib. ii.

Two thousand years ago the name of France was Gaul.

When Julius Cæsar invaded the country, some fifty years before the birth of Christ, he found it divided into three principal parts: there was Aquitaine, the land of springs and waters, extending, in the south-west, from the ocean to the Garonne, already a land of pleasant life, rich in commerce and refinement; there was Celtic Gaul, the west, which reached from the Atlantic to the Marne and the Seine; and there was Belgian Gaul (as Cæsar calls it), that north-eastern space between the Seine and the Rhine: an expanse which roughly corresponds to the provinces devastated by the Great War. Metz, Toul, Verdun, Soissons, Châlons, Saint-Quentin, Arras, Tournai, Cambrai, Noyon, Beauvais, Amiens, and Boulogne were even then the towns of Belgian Gaul. And the inhabitants of these districts, said the Roman General, are braver than any others "because not corrupted by the culture and humanities of the Roman Province [that is to say Provence, already completely Latinized] nor made effeminate by the passage of our merchants."

If Cæsar could revisit France to-day, he would find these essential differences still existent. The man from the Garonne, eloquent, able, versatile, fond of his ease, seems made by nature for a lawyer or a merchant; his neighbour from Celtic Gaul, the Breton sailor or the farmer from Anjou, is gentle, obstinate, and dreamy, careless of comfort or success—ever dependent on something beyond the facts of life: religion, poetry, politics, or drink. But these sons of Martha and these sons of Mary have more in common than either has with the man from the north-east, the keen, calculating, sparing Picard or Lorrainer, admirable in any battlefield, not only on account of his fierce courage, but because of his capacity for discipline, still as of old "*horum omnium fortissimus.*"

Coming from Italy to conquer first Gaul, and then the German tribes, Cæsar was struck by the difference in the worlds that reach from the two banks of the Rhine, and suddenly struck out an idea which, since then, has made much stir in the world: that the Rhine was the natural frontier of Gaul. On the left bank were studded villages with their fields and gardens, for the Celts were builders and agriculturists. Industry and prosperity reigned in their settlements, great were their ingenuity and order, and they would have been richer and more admirable still but for their extraordinary taste for civil conflict, for wars and rumours of wars, for party strife and turbulent agitation. The Gauls were ever lovers of a new thing, "*omnes fere Gallos novis rebus studere.*" Any change was welcome, and especially a change in the direction of stir and strife.

"In Gaul [writes Cæsar] not only every town, but every village and countryside is divided into opposite

factions. And indeed almost every family is thus split up into two camps, each with a chief who protects his partisans."

And he says that this excess of party feeling is doubtless due to the independent spirit of the Gallic race, consumed by a passion for equality, constantly alarmed lest they suffer the oppression of the great, "for none of them will bear any sort of tyranny or management; and they think their factions will protect them against the despotism of the upper class. Anyhow the custom obtains throughout the whole of Gaul, and you will find there no city that is not split in twain."

And yet this people, always taking sides, was bound in a social order of singular coherence and dignity. These independent, touchy folk—these often insolent Gauls—possessed great qualities of reverence and firmness. They loved their traditions. Their turbulent democracy respected two classes of men: their Church and their army, their Druids and their knights. But the Druids were something more than a Church, magistrates as much as priests, men of science according to the capacity of their time. Their seminaries were the equivalent of our universities. "The movement of the stars, the immensity of the universe, the nature of things, the power and force of the immortal gods, form the subject of their debates and of the theories which they transmit to the young."

These men of Gaul, so reasonable already, with their taste and instinct for philosophy—these ancestors of Pascal, Descartes, Malebranche, Voltaire—were none the less in the eyes of the practical Italian, extraordinarily superstitious, "too much addicted to religion," he says, "*Natio est omnium Gallorum admodum dedita religionibus.*" And the geographer Pomponius Mela

also remarks that they are "*gentis superbæ, superstitiosæ.*" It is indeed a constant trait of the race. The limits that divide the impossible from the merely unprecedented barely exist for the French. Miracles, wonders, marvels, are to them merely an extension of Nature. I think that is the reason the French are so great in physical science. Cæsar already noted their extraordinary inventiveness, their adroitness in experiment, but this of course is but the body of science; the soul of it lies in that imagination which constantly extends the limits of the possible. The same Pascal who accepts the miracle of the Holy Thorn invents the barometer and discovers the laws of hydrostatics; Curie, the finder of radio-activity, was deeply interested in the medium Eusapia Paladino; Pasteur was an orthodox Catholic. A strong vein of religiosity may complicate the mind of the physicist without impairing its lucidity. Even to-day Cæsar might remark the haunting frequency of immaterial influences, the sense of forces just behind the veil, the religious scruple, and confidence, and deprecation, which still distinguish so many of the children of the Druids, exciting (since there are always two parties in Gaul) a corresponding energy of materialism in the other half of the nation.

All this was changed when Cæsar crossed the Rhine. The Germans seemed to him to have no religion at all: no gods, no cultus, no ritual or tradition. They believed only in such things as they could see or feel: natural objects, the Sun, the Moon, or Thunder. They had no priests; the Druids had no counterpart on the further side of the Rhine. In Gaul, Cæsar had found a form of worship comprehensible to him, not unlike the other State religions of the time: Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, or their equivalents. The Germans were

different. These two peoples, sprung apparently from the same soil, were hopelessly divided so soon as they raised their eyes to heaven. In the eyes of the Germans, the King was the sole High Priest, and, after Nature, War the only god. Among their many altars the Gauls raised one to Teuta: the People, the City, as we should say the State. The Germans had no thought of such a collectivity, but they would die for their leader.

War was their real idol; the Germans were rovers, roaming from place to place with no abiding city. They had no fields, no gardens of their own. It was even forbidden to hedge round and till a private plot, lest the magic of possession dull a man's zest for war. Great were their virtues; they were patient, sparing, chaste, and long-enduring—but thieves to a man. They held it no crime to plunder a neighbouring tribe. And they were arrogant, with a rougher, ruder arrogance than the charming impertinence of Gaul. They could bear no equal within a day's journey of them. The lands beyond their forest fastnesses were a wilderness of desolation; for the Germans held it an honour that no man should endure their vicinity. They loved to reign supreme, and the emptiness and solitude of a ravaged desert seemed to them fairer than all the gardens and orchards of the Gauls.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

Julius Cæsar: *Commentaries.*
Pomponius Mela: *De Situ Orbis.*
Camille Jullian: *Vercengétorix.*
D'Arbois de Jubainville: *Les Premiers Habitants de l'Europe.*

CHAPTER II

THE GALLO-ROMANS: BORDEAUX

When the Romans burst in their order and their splendour into Gaul, they found before them a people, not savage indeed, but individualized to the verge of incoherence. The Gauls were brave, "soldiers to a man, and at every age," as Ammianus puts it. But they were undisciplined and disunited. The Romans were at least as brave, very hard, dour, and persevering fighters, and they were admirably organized. Therefore in the space of eight years Julius Cæsar conquered Gaul. And on their new possessions the Romans imposed the system of their culture so profoundly that to-day the French remain a Latin nation as conspicuously as they are a Celto-Frankish race.

The Roman system of conquest differed from that of most of the peoples of antiquity; it ennobled rather than humiliated. Rome imposed her rule on the vanquished; she neither enslaved nor exterminated. Her armies overwhelmed a country like a fertilizing tide, and then retired to Rome, leaving behind them her social organization, her municipal system, her culture, and her language. In exchange, she accorded to the towns included in her Empire the rights of Roman citizenship. The Gallo-Roman cities sent delegates to the metropolis, who voted there on questions

of war and state and Empire on the same terms as other Roman citizens; while, in Gaul, each town preserved a certain measure of Home Rule, choosing its own religious worship, ordaining its priests and regulating its ceremonies, electing its civic magistrates, administering its own estates and revenues, and deciding all questions of purely local interest. If in any respect the towns outran their due limits, Rome proceeded with vigour (as against the Christians of Lyons in A.D. 177), but her system was to prefer an occasional persecution in punishment of an excess to any sequence of preventive measures.

After some ineffectual revolts and revolutions, the Gauls yielded to the prestige of the Universal City; with every generation they admired her more wholeheartedly; and by the fourth century most of them could say with Ausonius: "*Romam colo*"—"Rome is my religion."

And indeed Rome had done much for Gaul. From Treves in the north to Bordeaux in the south, and the magnificent villas by the Mediterranean Sea, her rough military towns, her homely farms and fields, had been changed into marvellous gardens, into cities with aqueducts and amphitheatres and temples no less splendid or lovely than those of Rome herself. And all this with no rude displacing of beloved landmarks. Take for an example Autun, the Druids' town: the Romans made of it a great centre of their civilization; the school of rhetoric of Autun was reckoned to furnish the most brilliant orators of the Empire; its monuments were beautiful. But the old faith was not ousted or treated with contempt. The grandfather of the poet Ausonius was a Druid, and, in the middle of the fourth century, discoursed of the secrets of the

stars and delivered justice according to the ancient Celtic rites; walking in the streets of Autun, the good man might encounter the augurs of Mercury, or some deacon from the Christian Church established in the town since the first decades of the Christian Era. They were all citizens of the Empire, and equals.

It is difficult for us to form an idea of life in the Roman Empire: such an immense federation of peoples associated in an enchantment of material prosperity. Peace and power spread out such mighty wings that the races of the earth were harboured under them. And the national idea seemed abolished. The Greeks of Marseilles, the large Syrian colonies of Lyons the great industrial city on the Rhône, were as much at home in Gaul as the Romans or the Celts themselves. The conquered nations felt no barrier between them and supremacy: were not the Emperors Vespasian and Titus of Gaulish origin? If, for example, we glance for an instant at the genealogy of that Druid of Autun, we perceive how rapid was the ascension of a man of talent and how far-reaching the attraction of Rome. Cæcilius Arbor himself had been an unsuccessful person: a noble Druid, compromised in the revolt of Victorinus, he fled from Autun to Aquitaine in the concluding years of the third century, and, in his new home at Bordeaux, found his Celtic lore and Druid philosophy of such scant account that, in order to earn his children's bread, he was obliged to practise more remunerative accomplishments, such as fortune-telling and astrology. It is probable that Cæcilius Arbor was never quite at home in that splendid Gallo-Roman Bordeaux, nor did he express himself easily in Latin, but used in his home circle some Celtic dialect and considered Greek the natural language of philosophy.

His son, however, Emilius Magnus Arbor, Professor of Rhetoric at the University of Bordeaux, was the glory of the bar of Toulouse and one of the great Latin orators of his time. The men of Gaul were famous for their eloquence. The echo of Emilius Arbor's gift spread through the Empire till, at Constantinople, the Emperor heard of him and sent for the Gaulish barrister to educate his son.

Meanwhile, Emilius's sister had married a young doctor of Bordeaux, one Julius Ausonius, a specialist in rheumatic diseases. Their son, Decimus Magnus Ausonius, was the Latin poet, dear to all who have a secret attachment to minor verse. But, for the case in point, it is more important that Ausonius, the Druid's grandson, should have been the Governor of the Emperor Gratian, a Count of the Empire, First Consul of the year 379, Prefect of Africa, Prefect of Italy, and Prefect of the Gauls.

Thanks to Ausonius, who, born in 309, lived till the closing years of the fourth century—thanks to the excellent descriptive poet and letter-writer—we can form a living idea of what Gaul looked like under the Emperors Constantine, Valentinian, and Gratian. Even more than other ages, that age was a period of transition. The Roman Empire reigned supreme on the solid Roman roads that ran, from Bordeaux, for example to Paris, to Treves, to Spain, to Rome, and (with a marine interval) to Jerusalem. The carriages and horses of Gaul were far renowned; there was a mail-post; in fact, the service of the road was far better than it was to be in the Middle Ages and much as it existed at the date of the invention of railroads. For the men of the Roman Empire were no stay-at-homes; they were continually upon their beautiful

roads: soldiers, officials, or travellers. As you approached the towns, there, too, the magnificence of Rome was apparent in its state: villas whose vast constructions, faced by flowery porticoes and peristyles, crowned terraced gardens, where fountains played and statues gleamed among the greenery; there were noble monuments, baths, theatres, temples; among the farming villages there stood some modest Christian church. The grandson of Ausonius, Paulinus of Pella, gives us an excellent idea of a country house in Gaul at the end of the fourth century: "All that I asked in my youth [says he] was a comfortable mediocrity; for instance, a commodious villa with a double set of apartments disposed to the south for use in winter, and open to the north for summer-time; a well-furnished table; many slaves and in the flower of their youth; furniture of all sorts in great profusion; silver plate more precious for its workmanship than for its weight; among the staff of servants, artists of several sorts, quick to execute my fancies and devices; good stables full of horses and carriages of various sorts for driving." Paulinus says nothing of his library, but we know that Ausonius, his grandfather, was rich both in books and in instruments of music.

But as the traveller neared the towns of Gaul all this antique state and space and splendour shrank and changed: the cities of the reign of Constantine were the narrow, stifling cities of the early Middle Ages. For already the Barbarians had begun their inroads. The beautiful open cities of antiquity, spread largely on the plain, with spacious streets interspersed with gardens, with colossal temples, baths, porticoes, amphitheatres, were things of yesterday; many of these monuments still existed (since some of them remain

to-day), but outside the city walls, scattered among the vineyards. And the towns themselves had shrunken into fortresses with huge encircling walls garnished with towers: the towers of Bordeaux (said Ausonius) "pierce the clouds." The port was rich and busy, doing already a large trade in wine with England; the University was no less brilliant than it is to-day (Ausonius has left an agreeable gallery of portraits of the professors), but Bordeaux was no longer pleasant as a residential place; it had sadly fallen off from the antique enchantment, the exquisite urbanity, of the grandeur that was Rome.

This Roman Gaul of Constantine and Valentinian and their successors, with the Barbarian at the gates, was already full of the promise of the Middle Ages. The attempt of Julian to bring back the ancient gods had failed; though the landed nobility still clung to his device (they cling to it to-day, with a difference), and rallied to the cry: "τά πατρία ἐθη, τοῦς πατρίους νόμους, τον πάτρίον θεόν."

They, indeed, were full of fidelity and faith to the traditions, the laws, and the religion of their forefathers; they were soldiers, believers; but on all sides the Christian ideas were acting as a ferment, transforming society. Now, in the eyes of the Gallo-Roman nobles, no Christian could be a patriot, for the soul of patriotism was, to these men of yesterday, the great cultus of Rome and of Augustus which seemed to them the very cement that built and welded Gallic unity.

Yet, with the Barbarian at the gates, the Christians preached pacifism, non-resistance; they were indeed a peril in the State, more dangerous than men of violence —at least, the ultra-Christians, the party of the Saints,

those who, like Paulinus of Nola, besought their friends to desert in face of the enemy and to give themselves up to the salvation of their souls. There were many such: men who would not wear a sword or an arrow cut on the onyx of their ring; men who said, "We cannot serve two masters," and who left the army as a necessary consequence of their baptism; men of whom (seeing the danger of the Empire) we instinctively disapprove, until we suddenly remember that, since then, they have all been canonized—that they are called Paulinus of Pella, Paulinus of Nola, Sulpicius Severus, Saint Martin of Tours, Tertullian, Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine. All of them stand now in the ranks of the Orthodox; with them, and not with the Roman centurions and senators, lay the future of Europe.

The insidious dissolving element of saintly enthusiasm was doubtless one cause of the final undoing of the Roman Empire, which seemed as indestructible as its own monuments, yet crumbled at a shock. Another cause has already been indicated at the opening of this chapter: it was the complete divorce between local and imperial affairs. Political life and municipal life had nothing to do with each other. Although the cities of the provinces were extraordinarily free and prosperous, they had no voice in the administration of the Empire: Rome alone governed Rome. Rome sucked from all her subject countries, and drew to her own centre, the men of brain and will and energy who could serve her aims; absorbed them, estranged them from their origins; but the mass left behind in the great provincial towns, though it flourished happily and busily for its humbler ends and objects, was, from the point of view of the Empire, non-existent. Rome had but one head, and when that front was struck,

The King's Library

insensibility and inertia spread throughout the vast body of the Empire.

Or, to change our metaphor, these towns so solidly constituted, so separate, these rich municipalities are like round strong beads strung on a slender string. The fibre snaps, and the beads, in nowise destroyed, roll hither and thither, but form no longer a necklace. In the gradual disaggregation of the Roman Empire a quantity of little centres usurp the place of Rome: Milan, Sirmium, Treves, Arles, Paris, Vienne, Lyons; but they are local centres; they have no imperial sense. Little by little, the one real vital force that was left takes on more and more importance; the bishop becomes the natural chief of the inhabitants and more than their mayor. His election is the great affair of the city. What still is left intact of the great Roman order is rescued and preserved by the clergy. Between the municipal system of the Romans and the municipal system of the mediæval communes, the Church in the city guards and maintains a great tradition.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

Same as above.

The works of Ausonius, Ammianus Marcellinus, Samuel Dill.

Gaston Boissier: *La Fin du Paganisme.*

CHAPTER III

THE CHURCH IN GAUL: LYONS

In the first century of our era, Christianity had penetrated Gaul, but it was about a hundred and fifty years after the birth of Christ that the new religion suddenly awoke and spread, with a rare force of enthusiasm, among the poor industrial populations of the two great cities of the Rhône: Lyons and Vienne. A large Oriental colony was established in these places, Jews, Greeks, and Syrians, laborious, intelligent, and gentle. Their Gaulish neighbours, in adopting their ideas, gave them, as always happens, a twist in the direction of their own temperament—a temperament singularly romantic, superstitious, stoical, chivalrous, and ardent. And French Catholicism came into being. These Syrians of the Rhône knew little Latin and less Celtic; their tongue was Greek—much spoken at that date all through the south of Gaul, where the Greeks had settled long before the Romans knew anything of the country—and we may suppose that their religious instruction was often vague, perhaps half-understood, but the extraordinary fitness of the new ideas to the Gaulish temperament caused the religion to spread. The gods of Rome and Greece—nay, even the gods of Gaul—had never really satisfied the sons of the Druids; and this new faith, with its

constant dependence on the invisible, its perpetual visions and miracles, its Paradise promised, its Saviour sacrificed, its unparalleled appeal to the heart and the imagination, seemed made to their measure; these Gauls—nervous, excitable, and yet at the same time heroic and stoical—rushed, we may say, on martyrdom. They had not long to wait.

Lyons was the centre, not only of the young Church of Christ, but also of the patriotic cult of Rome and of the Roman Emperor, regarded as the personification of the Empire. Small wonder that the two religions clashed. Gaul entered into the Church of Christ in a triumph of martyrdom; Lyons was crowded with saints and confessors: the bishop, Pothin; the simple believers, Maturus, Sanctus, Attalus, and the little servant-girl, Blandine, were thrown to the wild beasts, after unutterable tortures, in the public amphitheatre, on the 1st of August, A.D. 177. In the fury of conviction on both sides—of faith and cruelty on the part of the persecutors (absolutely certain of their cause), of faith and stoicism on the part of the martyred—we meet for the first time a paroxysm of sentiment which we shall encounter again and again in the course of the history of France. Blandine is the sister of Joan of Arc and of Madame Rolland.

Smiling, and as if ignorant of her tortures, she endured the flagellation, the red-hot throne, the mauling mouths of the wild beasts, the tossings of the bull, and the final stroke of the sword. "Verily [said the Gauls] never in our country has a woman endured so much!" And, like those who were to burn the Maid of Orleans, then and there they felt dimly that they had put to death a saint.

The worship of the saints, the veneration of their

tortured bodies and the treasuring of relics, were features of the new religion which, in superstitious Gaul, awoke the dreamiest fervours of Celtic enthusiasm. Miracles, visions, venerations, ecstasy, contemplation, added all their gamut of holiness to the teaching of the Gospel; it was not for nothing that Lyons became the religious capital of the Gauls. For Lyons was already Lyons.

Nothing is more strange, in studying these early years of Christian Gaul, than to find the character of the different regions already so firmly fixed. The Bordeaux of Ausonius is already the Bordeaux of Montaigne—the Bordeaux of to-day: curious, intelligent, philosophic, sceptical, commercial. And the Lyons of Blandine is our Lyons, mystical, emotive, sensual, yet highly moral.

The doctrines of Christ had taken on a tinge from the souls who received them. Nor was the intense individualism of the Gaul without its effect on the new religion. Martin of Tours, Paulinus of Nola, Sulpicius Severus—nearly all the early Gallic saints, began or finished their saintly lives as hermits, dwelling in grottos or huts, solitary, remote from the world they abandoned. Nothing could be more shocking to the Roman idea of virtue, which is always an active principle. Virtue, in Latin, is valour. But the early Church in Gaul was a Church of Mary, not a Church of Martha, and its device was: *Unum est necessarium!* The Celtic people of believers was too apt to sink into an incurable apathy, a profound indifference for all things beyond the circle of religion—much as we notice to-day in Moslem countries. Instead of grouping themselves round the State in peril, these new forces gathered apart under the shelter of the Church. And

yet, in its next phase, the nation—that new thing, the nation (for the Roman Empire had ignored the principle of nationality)—the nation was to result from their religious cohesion and not from a political principle.

Despite its force, its violence, and terror, the Roman Empire had instituted the greatest moral union as yet known to man: the inhabitants of the civilized world were all the brothers of one family, the dwellers in one home, the equal members of one society. They might well say with Ausonius: "*Romam colo!*" When the barbarians in their hordes overwhelmed and ruined the material power of Rome, the religious unity of the Empire was, as it were, rescued by Christianity, and transformed into the Catholic Church. The Empire had been a religion and a family of which the half-divine Emperor had been the head. The Rome of the Popes survived the Rome of the Emperors and offered to mankind the shelter of the Church. The Past never really dies: we may forget it, ignore it; but it continues to vivify our actions; and deep down in the soul of man we may discover, as in the geological strata of a rock, the different phases of being that have formed him. The Roman Empire was one phase of the progress of humanity. In every Western nation, and nowhere more than in France, the Roman Empire is still a living root of social life.

For one thing, the Church preserved, almost unaltered, the Roman system of education. The great Christian orators and bishops had all been educated in the schools that served for the Pagan aristocracy. Saint Ambrose and Saint Augustine, Boethius and Paulinus, had been grounded on Cicero and Seneca; Cicero and Seneca had entered into the marrow of their natures. They could not conceive life and letters

without Cicero and Seneca. When Christianity became the religion of the Roman State, it did not occur to them to change the system of education. There were no other schools to take the place of the great, learned, and prosperous schools of the Latin rhetoricians. And Christian Rome adopted, just as the centuries of Latin culture had left it, the pedagogy of the Pagans, introducing it, with the Roman administration, into all the conquered provinces. Taking root there, it survived the Empire itself. And that is why our sons to-day learn their Latin, not in the Vulgate, but in Virgil!

SOURCES CONSULTED:

Same as before.

RENAN: *Origines du Christianisme*, t. vi.

THAMIN: *Saint Amboine.*

CHAPTER IV

THE KINGDOM OF TOULOUSE

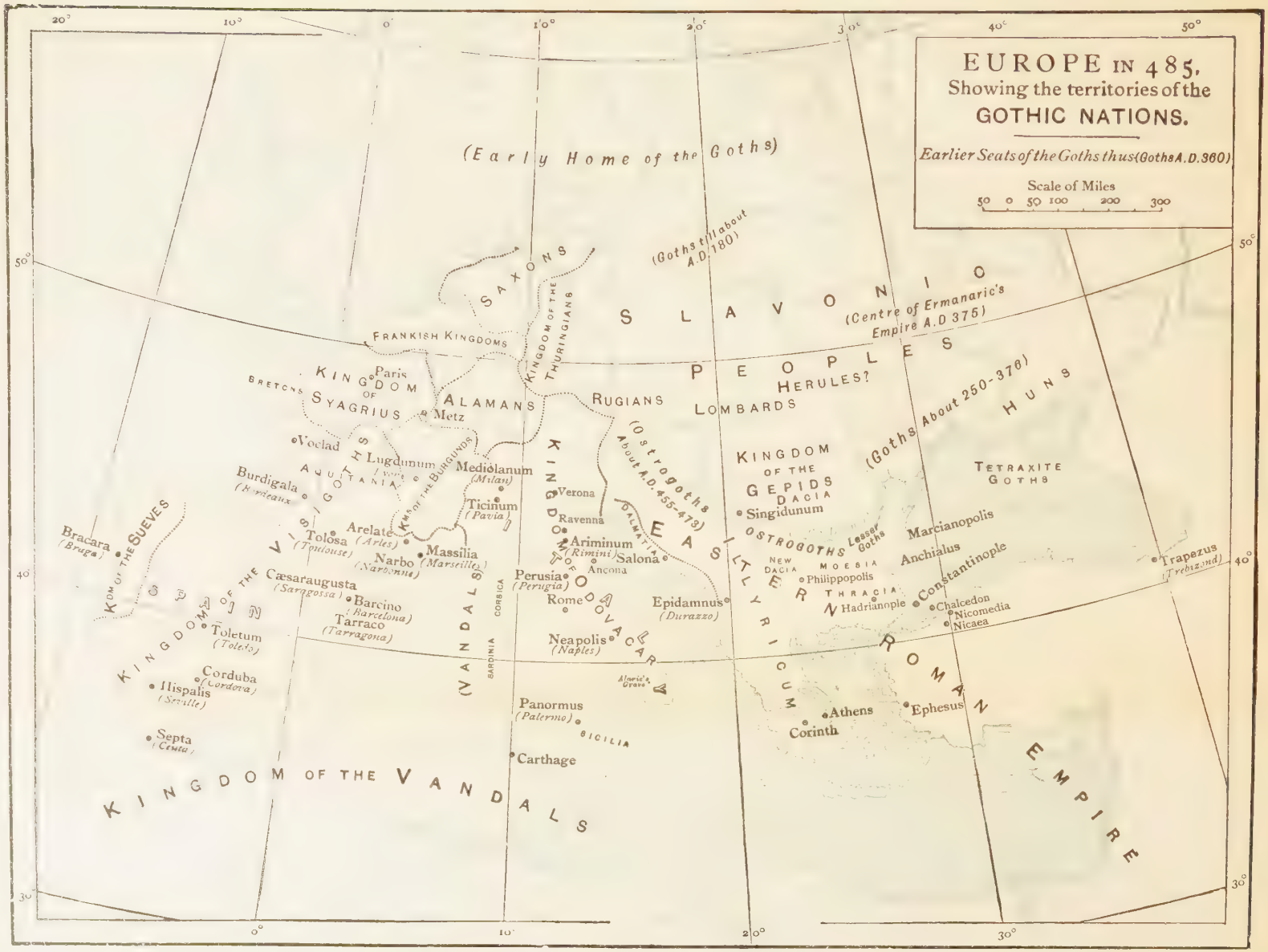
FROM the darkness of the Past these cities of the older France start into light, like the heads in some tarnished altar-piece before which a sacristan draws a lighted torch. But in what a lurid illumination we see the next, Toulouse: Toulouse, the century-long capital of the barbarian Visigoths!

Toulouse was an old town of the Celtic Tectosages, which existed probably many hundred of years before it was conquered by the Romans. It was always rich, not in the way of Lyons or Bordeaux, not as a great commercial centre, but rather as the depository and hoarding-place for the wealth of a vast agricultural region. Cæsar noticed it as "situated in an open country which produces a great deal of grain." Now, every one wants corn, and the farmers of Toulouse easily exchanged their harvests against sacks of gold; but they needed little, living on their fertile fields; so the gold accumulated in the treasure-tanks and secret chambers of the Druids' temples; part of it, no doubt, placed there as it were in a bank, but a great deal of it offered to the gods, for the yeomen and labourers of the region were religious—or, if you choose, superstitious—like all men who depend on the weather and the unguessed will of a Power above.

So rich a place, inhabited by so peaceful a population, is a temptation to robbers; and Toulouse, situated on the neck of land where Gaul is narrowest, is easy of access from the north, west, and east. So more than once the treasures of Toulouse were plundered, by the Romans, by the Cimbri, and might have been plundered yet more, had not men remarked that these ill-gotten gains finally enriched nobody, seemed to turn to faded leaves in the pocket like fairy-gold, while the robbers generally came to a miserable end. So that the words "Aurum Tolosanum"—the gold of Toulouse—became a proverb for unlawful wealth bringing a curse in its train.

But the real gold of Toulouse was on its plains and slopes, ripening anew every harvest, and the farmers and the priests speedily grew wealthy again, as owning a commodity that every one desires. And the rich, helpless city made the best terms it could with dangerous neighbours, swiftly growing as quick to betray as it was accustomed to be plundered, well aware that its real life lay in no schemes of policy or deeds of heroism, but in the task of producing bread for all.

Thus it existed for some hundreds of years, before and after Christ; and then, under the established rule of the Romans, happier days began. The Toulouse of the third and fourth centuries of our era was a learned and pleasant city, famous for its Bar and its University; "Palladian Toulouse," Ausonius calls it, and so do several of his contemporaries. The great brick town, so populous that it had founded four cities with the overflow of its population—rose-red Toulouse, sheltered by its huge ramparts overlooking its orchards, and its cornfields—appeared definitively


EUROPE IN 485,
Showing the territories of the
GOTHIC NATIONS.
Earlier Seats of the Goths thus (Goths A.D. 360)
Scale of Miles
50 0 50 100 200 300
(Early Home of the Goths)
(Goths till about A.D. 180)
(Centre of Ermanaric's Empire A.D 375)
(Goths About 250-376)
SLAVONIC PEOPLES
HUNS
TETRAXITE GOTHS
SAXONS
KINGDOM OF THE THURINGIANS
FRANKISH KINGDOMS
KINGDOM OF SYAGRIUS
BRETONS
Paris
Metz
ALAMANS
RUGIANS
LOMBARDS
HERULES?
KINGDOM OF THE GEPIDS
DACIA
Singidunum
(Ostrogoths About A.D. 455-473)
OSTROGOTHS
Lesser Goths
NEW DACIA
MOESIA
THRACIA
Philippopolis
Hadrianople
Marcianopolis
Anchialus
Constantinople
Chalcedon
Nicomedia
Nicaea
Trapezus (Trebizond)
EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE
ILLYRICUM
Athens
Corinth
Ephesus
Epidamnus (Durazzo)
DALMATIA
Salona
Ancona
Ravenna
Verona
Ariminum (Rimini)
Perusia (Perugia)
Rome
Neapolis (Naples)
Alaric's Grave
Panormus (Palermo)
SICILIA
Carthage
KINGDOM OF THE VANDALS
SARDINIA
CORSICA
Mediolanum (Milan)
Ticinum (Pavia)
KINGDOM OF THE BURGUNDS
Lugdunum
Voclad
AQUITANIA
Burdigala (Bordeaux)
Arelate (Arles)
Tolosa (Toulouse)
Massilia (Marseilles)
Narbo (Narbonne)
Cæsaraugusta (Saragossa)
Barcino (Barcelona)
Tarraco (Tarragona)
Toletum (Toledo)
Corduba (Cordova)
Hispalis (Seville)
Septa (Ceuta)
KINGDOM OF THE SUEVES
Bracara (Braga)
KINGDOM OF THE VISIGOTHS
SPAIN
KINGDOM OF THE VANDALS
20° 10° 0° 10° 20° 30° 40° 50°
50° 40° 30°

seated in its peace and its prosperity when, with the very dawn of the fifth century, the Roman Empire crumbled and fell to bits.

In 402 Alaric the Goth invaded Italy; in 406 the Vandals entered Gaul; in 417 the Goths, now allied with the Romans, chased the Vandals out of Spain and sent two captive Vandal kings to Rome in a triumph. Then, in exchange for Spain, the Goths were awarded Aquitaine, "The Pearl of Gaul," "The Queen of Provinces," with its towns of Bordeaux, Agen, Angoulême, Poitiers, and, finally, Toulouse, where the King of the Goths set up his court.

There were Gauls in Toulouse who went out into exile rather than endure the yoke of the Barbarian; such was a certain Victorinus, the friend of Rutilius the poet, who left the land of his birth to live in Tuscany; but there seems to have been no general revolt against the Goths. For one thing, they were brave soldiers, and the whole country round was infested by Germans: the Franks having settled in the north, the Burgunds in the west, and the Sarmates round Paris. Of all these the Goths were the most princely, courteous, and strong; they were Christians, and had assimilated a part of the Roman culture.

It is difficult to assign an exact origin to any of these races of Barbarians who lived on the road, ate and slept on horseback, with their wives and all their wealth in their rude wagons, "trekking" from Finland to Constantinople and from the Vistula to Gaul; it is so easy to take a halting-place for a cradle. But it is probable that the Franks were Germans from the Rhine; the Goths, Germans from the banks of the Baltic, and probably of Scandinavian origin; while the Huns (we are just coming to the Huns) were of

Finnish or Mongol origin—dreadful little men, like a bad dream, with their fat, flat faces, pig eyes, rare beards, squat square shoulders and dwarfish stature, "more like biped animals," says Jornandès, "than like men." The Goths, Barbarians though they were, seemed a protection against such as these.

The Goths were more or less alive to the things of the spirit. In the fourth century their bishop, Wulfilas, combining the Greek and the Roman characters, had invented for them an alphabet: the Black Letter. King Eurik of Toulouse drew up the first German code of laws. They were a sort of link between the civilized world and the outer darkness of those cruel camps on the road. Better they than worse, at Toulouse! Such was probably the attitude of the discouraged country people. And, in fact (as we are told by Jornandès, the Goth), no sooner were they established by the banks of the Tarn than the Burgunds and Franks, "who infested the region most cruelly," retired each to his own place, while the Vandals and Alans crossed the mountains and returned to Spain.

Sidonius Apollinaris, the Roman Secretary of a Gothic King, has left us a description of the Barbarian court in Aquitaine, at that moment in residence at Bordeaux. But how different from the Bordeaux of Ausonius in the preceding century!

"I have been here nearly two months," he writes to a friend, "and have as yet obtained but one audience of the King. The master of the Palace has little leisure for me, for the whole world is here waiting on his pleasure, expectant of an answer. Here passes a blue-eyed Saxon, that no sea puts off his balance walking on the solid earth with a rolling sailor's gait. There, some old Sicamber, who has shaved his poll

in shame of some defeat, is now letting his locks grow anew. Look at yon sea-green Herule, the tint of his own Ocean! And see the Burgund, seven feet high, who bends the knee and implores peace. Here comes an Ostrogoth, the terror of the Huns, but humble enough before King Eurik. And thou, thyself, O Roman, thou comest also to the court of the Visigoth, suing for dear life! The strong arm of Eurik shall be thy buckler against the hordes of Scythia, and the Garonne, warlike and powerful, shall protect the enfeebled Tiber."

Under the wise rule of these enlightened Barbarians, Toulouse became the centre of Occidental politics, a link between the Imperial Court and the half-savage Franks and Burgunds. Surrounded by the flower of Gallo-Roman culture, the King of the Goths was almost as refined and far more dignified than Cæsar at Constantinople, and the Latin prose of King Eurik was praised at Rome for its purity and grace.

The Goths reigned at Toulouse for ninety years, and held, towards the close of the fifth century, nearly all the country south of the Loire and west of the Rhône: all Provence and all Aquitaine. And then they passed. There is nothing to tell of the kingdom of Toulouse. These apt pupils founded nothing. All over France we come across memorials of the great Roman domination; and they exist no less in the souls and minds of the French: in their system of education, their municipalities, their law, even their religion—all these modern edifices are built up with Roman bricks. We cannot even imagine France without her Roman background. And the Goths in their glory and their bravery passed, and they would be as they had never been but for one great battle

which they fought, side by side with the Romans, at Châlons, one of the few decisive battles of the world. The question whether barbarism or civilization should prevail in Western Europe was then decided.

It was in 451. Attila and his heathen Huns were pouring into Gaul, burning and plundering the towns, desolating the marches of Lorraine and Champagne. We have no word for the horror inspired by the Huns. The usurpers in Gaul rose as one man against them —Romans, Goths, Burgunds, Franks. But there were still more Huns, for all the savage kingdoms conquered by Attila marched in his train. There were weeping and fear and lamentation in all the cities in Gaul, till a little Christian shepherdess from Nanterre, near Paris—a Gallo-Roman girl named Genovefa, inspired by that singular fusion of political sense with an ecstatic faith in the Unseen which more than once has illuminated the women of France at some great crisis in the national history—declared that Attila was doomed, that the Huns should not come near Paris. In superstitious Gaul her prophecy spread far and wide, heartening the distraught populations. And has not grateful Paris ever since named Geneviève its patron saint? But if Gaul owed much that day to the sanctity of the young shepherdess of the Seine, who awoke courage and hope in the hearts of the soldiers, Gaul owed even more to Theodoric the Goth, King of Toulouse, who lost his life on the fields of Châlons.

He lost his life, but he won the battle! Attila was compelled to retire to his camp, mourning a hundred and sixty thousand men. Like a wounded lion (says the Gothic historian) he turned and held his enemy at bay, and then, gathering the mighty remnant of his forces around him, slowly he retreated into Italy.

Nor did the Huns again cross the frontiers of Gaul. And the Goths ruled at Toulouse for another fifty years, till they in their turn were defeated and routed by Clovis the Frank.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

JORNANDÈS: *De Getarum Origine.*
HENRY BRADLEY: *The Goths.*
VICTOR DURUY: *Histoire de France.*
PRÉVOST-PARADOL: *Essai sur l'Histoire universelle.*

CHAPTER V

THE KINGDOM OF FRANCE

Now let us cross the Loire and enter that northern half of Gaul so strangely different from the France of the South. For if Lyons, Vienne, Bordeaux, Toulouse, and all the cities of Provence (and indeed right up to Poitiers, Tours, or even Orleans) appear easily recognizable—and in such detail that the very villages of our acquaintance bear as a rule in their names the trace of the Roman *villa* or *vicus* that they have superseded—the whole North of France was still, at that date, enveloped in forests from which emerged rude military towns, as a rule forts or posting-stations. Treves in its Roman magnificence was a notable exception: "The eye no longer has to pierce a network of branches to find the sky, obscured by a green mist: the air is clear again; the sunlight radiates in space; and at last I beheld an image of Bordeaux, its brilliant culture, its green vineyards and smiling villas." So Ausonius in his poem on the Moselle records his journey through the interminable northern forest.

If towards the end of the fifth century we cross the Loire, on a mission, let us say, to Clovis, King of Tournai, the great man of that age, we find ourselves, between Orleans and Frankish Soissons, in a country still nominally Roman, the kingdom of Syagrius.

But since the invasion of Attila all that region was in reality far more Christian than Roman. In most eyes, its chief city, Lutetia (the capital of the Parisii), was less remarkable as the residence of King Syagrius than as holding in its walls, like a relic, the holy Geneviève, whose prayers, in the estimation of all her Christian contemporaries, had preserved the kingdom of Paris, as Lutetia began to be called, from the abhorred inroad of the Huns. With Saint Marcel, Bishop of Paris, and Saint Remy, Bishop of Reims, Geneviève, far more than any Roman viceroy, was the respected leader of the people.

And on the Belgian frontier Clovis, King of Tournai, considered these things in his heart. He was a German, or at least a Frankish, heathen, but his young wife, Clotilde, was of the Church of Christ. Clovis was a man of extraordinary acuteness, activity, and restlessness. He saw the growing importance of the Catholic Church, he remarked the ardent faith of that Gaul in which his German gods made of him and his chiefs mere strangers and usurpers—such as the Visigoths had always remained in Aquitaine. For the Goths were Arians, and had never had the policy to see the widening gulf which their heretical opinions were opening between their ruling caste and the intolerant Catholics, their subjects. Doubtless Clovis said to himself that a great part might be played by a Catholic soldier of genius, and that the cross might make a splendid handle to a sword. And perhaps, as the legend avers, his wife had influence on him. Whether or no he thought, with Henri Quatre: "*Paris vaut bien une messe*" (and Toulouse another), at all events, in 496, at the hands of Saint Remy, he was baptized at Reims, he and three thousand of his Frankish followers.

Ten years before, in 486, at the age of one-and-twenty, Clovis had beaten the Roman Syagrius in battle, near Soissons, and had taken his kingdom from him. King Syagrius had fled to Toulouse, and was at first received with welcome, but when Clovis demanded his victim the Gothic king dared not refuse so powerful a neighbour, and handed over his guest and ally, loaded with chains, to the tender mercies of the conqueror. This proof of the feebleness of the Gothic king encouraged the disaffection of the Catholics, for the hatred between religious parties was so great that it was almost impossible, in Gaul, for a sovereign to win the allegiance of subjects who regarded him as a heretic. And, after the baptism of Reims, many of the clergy began to offer public prayers for the coming of Clovis, the champion of the Church.

In 507 he came, accompanied by signs and wonders, by comets blazing in the sky, by mysterious messages from the saints; a white hart showed him a ford through the swollen waters of the Vienne in flood; and all these presages and miracles showed at least that the foreign king had been adopted by the very heart of superstitious Gaul. He advanced with unexampled rapidity. At Vouglé, near Poitiers, a great battle took place; the Visigoths were utterly defeated and their king was killed. In less than two years Clovis conquered almost all their Gaulish dominions, and added them to those kingdoms of Paris, of Reims, of Tournai, of Soissons, which he had already inherited or taken. They were now the *kingdom of France.*

And of the Visigoths, after ninety years of possession, nothing was left, save one word: out of "Visigoth" (in the flat, almost Spanish pronunciation of Aqui-

taine, "Bisigot") the people made Bigot. It was their revenge for the dominion of the heretic.

Aquitaine had now acquired another foreign name: it was part of *France*. But the Franks, having conquered, did not remain in possession like the Goths; they retreated north of the Loire. The Franks, though brave and powerful, were but a smallish tribe. It is improbable that their conquest greatly affected the racial composition of the peoples south of the Loire, which remained principally Celtic, with a strong infusion of Latin, both in Aquitaine and in the Provincia; for the Romans during the half-dozen centuries of their dominion had loved these sunny and temperate regions of Gaul, had settled there abundantly and mingled their stronger strain with the supple native stock of the inhabitants.

But Clovis came of another race—a Frank is a German and a forest-lover: the radiant space and sunniness of these southern plains were profitable in his eyes as a conquest; but for a capital and a home, he preferred the North. Thus, at the moment when Gaul becomes France, Paris, not Lyons, or Arles, or Toulouse, or even Tours, becomes the capital.

Paris had never been an important place under the Roman dominion: the actual diocese of Paris represents pretty accurately the territory of the Parisii (so true is it that the Church has preserved all sorts of vestiges of Rome like flies in amber), but their capital was contained in the two small islands of the Seine, gradually overflowing on to the left bank where the Palace of the Thermæ (whose ruins still border the Boulevard St. Michel) stood among the vineyards. The Emperor Julian had liked Paris and had spent a winter there (it was, indeed, there that he was pro-

claimed Augustus); "a small city," he says, "πολίχνη," but he admired the mild, equable climate and praised the thin wine of Suresnes. There was an amphitheatre there, of which something still remains, but compared with the cities of the South its monuments were of small account. Clovis and his wife, when they reigned there, founded a Christian church in honour of SS. Peter and Paul (on the site of the Pantheon), but their reign was short, and when it came to an end, in 511, Paris again slipped out of notice for several centuries.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

Same as above.

CHAPTER VI

THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

When the Romans reigned in Gaul, the conquered Celts forgot their native tongue, adopting the language of their masters, and by the end of the fourth century there was little trace remaining of the primitive Celtic speech. Its last, rare vestiges linger still in the names of places, always the words that change the least. Even to-day the suffix *dun* evokes a Celtic fortress (as in Verdun, Issoudun, Châteaudun), the prefix *tre* or *tref* recalls a long-perished hamlet; *dieue* and *couse* speak of the waters, *nant* of the dingle, *lan* or *lande* of the field or God's acre. That is all. If we except the province of Brittany, whose Celtic speech was re-imported after the fall of the Roman Empire, the Celts the Romans knew have left no trace of their language in modern France.

For the Celts of Gaul conversed in Latin, not in the Latin of the classics but in a living, popular Latin of their own. This rustic Roman tongue—this Roman, or Romance, as it came to be called in distinction from literary Latin—is still alive and easily recognizable (although much alloyed by constant additions from modern French) in the dialects and *patois* of the Centre and the South of France. The names of usual objects there have probably changed little since the

days of Diocletian. There still a cock is *gall*, a wild field *comps*, a cornfield *fromentaù*, while *aigo* recalls *aqua* and *neù*, *niveus;* a bird is *ussell*, a cow *bacco*, a dog *cone;* when the shepherds pass the summer on the heights they are said to *estivar*, while *hibernar* is to spend the winter. The sights and sounds, the habits and necessities of daily life are still currently expressed in rustic Latin.

For the Centre and South of France retained the impress of Rome until the beginning of the thirteenth century. But in the North the Romans receded early, giving place to the Franks. Early in the sixth century Brittany was reconquered by the Celts of England and thus lost, for full five hundred years, to Latin culture. And all along the Rhine German invasion and possession effaced the Latin tongue. Only in the region which lies between the Somme, the Meuse, and the Loire were the Frankish and the Latin languages beautifully interfused. This was the cradle of France. And when France began to speak, it spoke in French.

The earliest French poem that we possess dates from the third quarter of the ninth century; the language is still all mixed with and steeped in Latin:

> Buona pulcella fut Eulalia,
> Bel avret corps, bellezour anima. . . .
> In figura de colomb volat a ciel.
> Tuit oram que por nos degnet preier
> Qued avuisset de nos Christus mercit
> Post la mort, et a lui nos laist venir
> Par soun clementia!

(Bonne pucelle fut Eulalie. Elle avait un beau corps, une âme plus belle. . . . Elle vola au ciel en forme de colombe. Prions tous qu'elle daigne intercéder pour nous, Afin que

le, Christ ait pitié de nous Après la mort et nous laisse venir à lui Par sa clémence.)

Meanwhile the Church continued to use the right Latin of Rome, and often in old books we find the clerks calling the Latin of the people *lingua laica*, while the laymen name the Church-Latin *clerquois*. During the course of the ninth century the two languages became distinct; Latin was no longer understanded of the people. The clergy were obliged to use the popular dialect for their catechisms and sermons, and, in fact, in the year 812 the Council of Tours ordered the priests of France to instruct their flock in "the rustic Roman tongue." Henceforth French is no mere *patois*, but a national speech with a literature of its own.

This "rustic Roman tongue" was the language not only of the Gallo-Romans but of their conquerors. The Franks had vanquished Gaul, but may we not say that Gaul had vanquished the Franks, since they adopted both her religion and her language? Their native tongue furnished the French with some few hundred words: first and foremost, terms of war, such as *guerre* itself, or *werre*, as it is written in old French, and *guet*, a watch; the names of weapons: *targe*, a small round shield or mark to fire at (our target); *blason*, again a shield (though I believe it originally meant a trumpet, the word being connected with blare); *haubert*, a hauberk, or coat of ringed mail, shielding the neck (halsberg); *heaume*, a helmet; *éperon*, a spur; *étrier*, a looped rope for mounting into the saddle, a stirrup; then came the flags: *gonfanon*, *bannière;* also words of wounding, such as *blesser*, *navrer*. There are other terms which show the first

conception of a new state of society: homme-*lige; vassal* (originally a comrade—the Frankish *ghesel* being the same word as the German *Gesell*—but taken in the sense of a comrade bound to his free or liege lord) and *valet*, which is *vassalet*, i. e., the son of a vassal, taken into his lord's house to be bred as a page; *échanson*, a cupbearer; *séneschal*, a steward, literally an old servant (sinsskalks), and *maréchal*, a master of the horse, literally a horse-servant; *échevin*, a sheriff; *échiquier*, a treasury, an exchequer. Nearly all the names of furs are Frankish; many terms of dress or furniture, such as *banc*, *fauteuil* (fald-stuhl); or of food, such as *gâteau*, *bière*, *bacon*, *rôtir*. The city takes its name from Rome, but the small town, the *bourg*, is Frankish, and the hamlet, *hameau*, and the hovel, *borde*. But chiefly the French language owes to the Frankish its terms of landscape, its words of country life: *lande*, moor; *haie*, hedge; *gazon*, turf; *bois*, wood; *jachère*, fallowland; *gerbe*, sheaf; *if*, yew; *houx*, holly; *hêtre*, beech; *roseau*, reed; *mousse*, moss; all are of the Barbarians' bringing—and what a woodland landscape they evoke! Nor was this all. The Franks supplied the Gallo-Roman peoples with certain moral qualities whose names remain in the language: pride, *orgueil;* and frankness, *franchise*, that courageous sincerity which the conquerors of Gaul regarded as the characteristic of their race; and the adjectives *gai*, *gaillard* (hearty), *joli*, *hardi*, *riche*, *frais*, were surely worth having; and the verbs, if less charming, are no less eloquent of the manners of the conqueror; they are *haïr* (to hate), *honnir* (to scoff at), *épargner* (to spare), *effrayer* (to affright; in its original signification, to break the peace), *tricher* (to cheat), *garder* (to keep), *gagner* (to gain), *jangler* (to speak ill). This mere list

of words, with which I have perhaps fatigued my reader, will none the less, if he consider them, show him what qualities and conceptions the Frankish domination brought to France, and prepare him to understand the new organization which began slowly to emerge from the chaos which ensued on the dissolution of the Roman Empire: the theme which we have next to consider, Feudal Society.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

D'Arbois de Jubainville: *Les Premiers Habitants de l'Europe.*
Gaston Paris: *La Littérature française au Moyen Age.*
La Poésie française au Moyen Age.
Charles Oulmont: *La Poésie française au Moyen Age.*
Arsène Darmesteter: *La Vie des Mots.*

PART II

FEUDAL SOCIETY

CHAPTER I

THE RISE OF FEUDALISM

THE descendants of Clovis were not strong enough to keep in their hands the empire he had conquered. According to Barbarian custom, each brother in the royal family inherited an equal share of his father's kingdom, taking not one great region, east, north, south, or west, but (much as to-day, when the property of some peasant farmer is divided, and each child claims his narrow strip of woodland on the northern slope, his rood or two of meadow down by the river, and his strip of vineyard lying to the south, so that he may possess a reduced image of the paternal farm) they separated the kingdom into a quantity of portions, equal in value, and then drew lots for them. So it happened that one would possess Arles, Bordeaux, Melun, Tours, Marseilles, and Avranches, while his brother was lord of Soissons, Rouen, Nantes, Cahors, etc., leaving to a third Avignon, Verdun, Clermont-Ferrand, Laon, and Reims, while Paris was divided into three lots, and, under the sway of its bishop, remained practically a neutral town. So capricious an arrangement precluded any feeling of loyalty on the one hand, of protective sovereignty on the other, between the king and his people. The anarchy in Gaul was complete. But in this absence of any cen-

tralized authority there were two forces which grew and increased in strength: the independent municipalities and the Church.

The Barbarian sovereignty affected but little the regions south of the Loire, where the Roman manners and customs still reigned, almost undisturbed, save when some invading force ravaged all on its passage; but in the North and East where the Frankish population swelled its train with hordes of half-savage pagans from beyond the Rhine, the centre of society changed: the towns became less important and the country more. Here the language and the manners of the population were oddly mingled. From the Seine to the Somme the Gallo-Romans were still more numerous than the Franks, and the Latin language held its own; but from the Somme to the Rhine the Barbarians were no longer, as in the kingdom of Paris, mere colonies or bands of idle warriors, leading the lusty life of peace in their country houses, hunting and carousing between two campaigns; in the north-east of France they had settled in tribes, bringing with them their farmers and labourers; and here the natives of Gaul were the minority, while the peasants and warriors of Frankish origin formed the bulk of the population. The privileges of these latter were great; according to the Wehr-geld of the Frankish conquerors, the fines paid for murder or hurt to the victim or his heirs were always twice as great in the case of a Barbarian being assaulted as in the event of a native's injury; while all men of Frankish race were exempt from the taxes on the land, which were still, though very irregularly, collected according to the system which the Romans had instituted. The Gallo-Roman landlords paid for all; and were mulcted in their crops,

their cattle, their woods, their vines, besides paying a heavy house-tax. That principle of privilege and exemption of one class at the expense of another, which the French Revolution should finally uproot, flourished exceedingly in the France of the Franks.

The towns of Frankish Gaul were governed, as in the time of the Romans, by an assembly of citizens (called the Curie), by a bench of magistrates, and a *Defensor*, or Lord Protector, which office, in later times, was generally assumed by the bishop. At least, that is how the town was governed, and generally very well governed *as* a town, as an independent organism; but it was attached to the central power by a supreme official, a sort of prefect, called a *Graf* or count, a functionary destined to receive the dues and dispense the authority of the king.

Except this functionary, when in pursuit of his duties, the nobles of that time, whether of Frankish or Gallo-Roman strain, no longer frequented the towns; the King of Neustria (north-western France), to take an instance, resided not in Paris, but in some great hunting-lodge or farm, either at Braine, near Soissons, or at Chelles-sur-Marne, or on some other of his rural estates. And the counts and margraves of his following, when they did not gather round him in their bands and coteries (for the form of society that was to culminate in Versailles springs from a very ancient stock in France), were hunting, or harvesting, or harrying their serfs on their own properties. These noble or even royal habitations had nothing of the military aspect of the towns, whose walls and towers were already quite mediæval; they were just handsome and spacious wooden buildings, surrounded by large pillared verandas or piazzas, modified from the

Roman peristyle, whose columns were often very ingeniously carved and polished—

> Singula silva favens ædificavit opus,
> Altior innititur, quadrataque porticus ambit,
> Et sculpturata lusit in arte faber,

says Fortunatus, the Latin poet, who was the guest of the Frankish king at Braine.

These counts and margraves who gathered to the court—the *antrustions*, the great Frankish chiefs who lived in the *truste* (or fealty) of a king—were less his subjects, than his confederates; upon notice given, and for cause esteemed sufficient by their peers, they might transfer their allegiance to another overlord and yet retain their estates in the dominions of their ex-sovereign. Now, a king's real wealth was not his possessions, but the forces that he could muster on the day of battle; so that he was in fact more dependent on his nobles than they on him, and perpetually anxious to find a counterpoise to their power. The rise of Gallo-Roman ministers, often born in serfdom, the royal favour so frequently bestowed on the great Gallo-Roman families, were expedients of the Frankish kings to balance the preponderance of their antrustions.

The struggle was no longer between Roman and Barbarian, between victor and vanquished, but between the great military nobility on the one hand and the king and his ministers on the other. The feebleness of the Merovingian kings rendered the effort too unequal. In the middle of the eighth century the last descendant of Clovis was dethroned by his nobles, and sent, against his will, to end his days in a monas-

tery; one of their own order was set upon the throne, the Pope himself pronouncing in favour of the usurper, saying it was meet that the title and the reality of power should go together. The name of this usurper, the candidate of the nobles, was Pépin le Bref. He was crowned by St. Boniface, and was succeeded by his son. That son was Charlemagne.

Charlemagne reigned four-and-forty years, and left a name as great as Alexander's.

> Merveillus hum est Charles!
> Il cunquist Rome, Puille et tute Calabre,
> Constantinoble et Saissoigne la large,
> Vers Engleterre passat-il la mer salse!

Here the poet exaggerates; the conqueror of Rome, Italy, Constantinople, Saxony, did not invade our islands; but by the end of the eighth century the Frankish king had overcome Europe from Spain to Hungary, from the Mediterranean to the shores of the Baltic and the Northern Sea. The kingdom of the Franks measured a thousand miles from north to south, as much from east to west: it was no longer a kingdom but an empire. One Christmas Day in Rome—it was in the year 800—the Pope, Leo III, placed on Charlemagne's brow the crown of the Emperors of the West, and all Rome shouted: "Hail the August! Long life and victory to the Roman Emperor!" The echo of that cry rang through Italy to France, Germany, Northern Spain, all at last again united in a Pax Romana.

Charlemagne had conquered Europe. More than that: he organized and administered his vast possessions. This great captain, who could read but little

—who, despite his efforts, could never learn to write—was one of those master-minds who every thousand years, astonish humanity. Like that other soldier of France who, exactly a thousand years later (for 800–814 match with 1800–1814) was to conquer the world again and to renew its law, Charlemagne established his order wherever his armies pitched their camps. He drew up a code of customs, founded schools (himself attending their classes, learning at fifty Greek and Latin), he made an immense and glorious effort to pull the car of empire out of its Barbarian rut and set it rolling down the roads of Rome. But, like Napoleon, Charlemagne failed. He had amassed too much; he had no fit successor. His son, Louis the Debonnair, was a feeble, faltering soul. His three grandsons cast lots for his vesture, and between them dislocated the Empire. The eldest, Charles the Bald, took France; Louis appropriated Germany. The weakest, Lothair, was given Italy; and, to make his share less conspicuously small, was accorded the title of Emperor, with a long strip of territory torn from the living side of France—from the Meuse to the Rhine, from the Rhône to the Alps—which was named Lothair's Land, Lotharingen, or, as we say, Lorraine. But no act of empire could infuse a soul into the bleeding remnant snatched from the flanks of Gaul. The rib was a rib, not Eve. Lorraine continued French in feeling and tradition. Many of the wars of Europe have sprung from this iniquity, perpetrated at Verdun in 843. A hundred years after the Treaty of Verdun, Lothair's Land had disappeared; half, the duchy of Lorraine, had been annexed to Germany, the other half englobed in Italy. Charlemagne's inheritance was divided against itself. Otho the Great, wearing

at once the crowns of Italy and Germany, restored the Roman claims under the style of "the Holy Roman Empire of Germanic Nationality," and France found in front of her the rival and enemy with whom, throughout the centuries, she should dispute the sway of Europe.

Out of the four elements which we have passed in review—out of the old Celtic foundation, the Roman culture, the Christian Church, and the Frankish conquest—at last a new society issued: Feudal Society. Until the middle of the eighth century, when Charlemagne revived for a moment the Empire of the West, there had been no society in Gaul since the fall of the Roman Empire, merely a chaos of ill-assorted atoms. At last these atoms were organized and came to life. But not on the grand scale of which Clovis and Charlemagne had dreamed. However great a man may be, he cannot invent a form of society —at least not one that will long survive the living impression of his will and personality. A form of society must organize itself out of its own elements. And indeed, after the death of Charlemagne, society appeared more than ever to be falling to pieces. The princes again split up their empire to suit their individual tastes; they had never appeared more egotistic, more remote from their subjects; royalty had never seemed more utterly divorced from power, justice, or assistance.

Towards the middle of the ninth century, those dukes and counts who had originally been functionaries of the Roman Empire, who in later days had been the administrators of the Barbarian Kings, took on a new importance, and in the increasing weakness of any

central government became owners and substantial powers. One after another, they affirmed as their own, and as transmissible by heredity to their children, an authority which they had originally exercised merely as officials and delegates. Each duke and count became a law unto himself, led his subjects into battle, exacted from them their toll of taxes, administered justice, entailed his estates. There was no longer any centre, any whole, any organization in Gaul, only a lively disintegration of parts.

The Roman Empire, which Charlemagne had vainly attempted to revive, was truly dead and buried. But something stirred in the grave; the dust began to heave and breathe. It was a very low form of life; but at least it was life. Life ever renews itself at first in lowly forms. This new attempt at an organism and an order began its long progress towards those heights from which the Roman Empire had fallen in ruins.

Let us imagine for a moment the condition of one of those country districts in which some Gallo-Roman count or duke, some Frankish noble or Danish pirate, established himself lord and master. No road is sure; battle and murder are constant; the king is so remote that few in the countryside even know his name. Then comes our captain, fiercer and stronger than any of his neighbours, showing his teeth like an angry mastiff at any menace of aggression. His wooden fortress stands proudly on its rock, commanding all the country round; behind his planks and palisades he reigns, he rules, far more surely than the king in Paris. And the farmers unite to proclaim him their chief, saying: "Protect me from mine enemies and I will be thy man!"

Often this captain is already the chief of a band:

we know how the Frankish nobles lived in troops and companies. Now that he has established himself on the footing of a petty sovereign, he will divide his lands with his companions. They will be his vassals (we know that *vassal* is the same word as *Gesell*, comrade, the letters *g* and *v* being interchangeable), they will be his captains and his magistrates and do him homage for their estates. Be sure he will keep for himself the choicer morsels; the slopes that suit the vine, the rocks on which a fort may stand, the great stretches of forest, the ports on sea or lake or river (indeed, woods and waters belonged by right, in feudal law, to the lord of the land), but yet he will find it to his interest to surround himself with powerful nobles who can aid him in the hour of need.

They, in their turn, will divide their territories into smaller fiefs: some of them, like their own, are *terres nobles*, entailing only military service; some of them are ploughlands, or *terres roturières* (that puzzling word in modern French, *roturier*, a commoner, comes from *ruptura*, the opening of the furrow), and these last are paid for in rent or in labour—more often, in those days of scanty coin, in work; the peasant holding his plot in exchange for so many days' *corvée*, or forced labour, on his landlord's grounds, or on condition of supplying certain *redevances*, such as wood, corn, wine, poultry, butter, etc., for the lord's consumption. This *corvée*, these *redevances* (which were gradually to degenerate into fearful abuses—which were, indeed, largely to provoke the French Revolution), were, at their origin, merely commodious forms of rent. Of the greater part of the tenants on such an estate it may be said that they lived like freedmen and they died like slaves. There were serfs, of course,

who were really slaves, or little better; they belonged to their masters, body and goods and gear. "Li uns des sers," says Beaumanoir (and he lived in the thirteenth century, in the time of St. Louis!)—"Li uns des sers sunt si souget à lor seignor que lor sires por prendre quanques que il ont, à mort et à vie, et les cors tenir en prison, toutes les fois qu'il lor plest, soit à tort, soit à droit qu'il n'en est tenus à respondre fors à Dieu."

The lord might beat, imprison, chastise, taunt them at his will; it was a mere chance if he was generous. But what the serfs complained of most was the uncertainty of their service: their innumerable *corvées* might be exacted of them at any moment: "ne savent le vêpre de quoi il serviront le matin; il n'y a nul certaineté de servises."

But the greater part of the tenants were not, strictly speaking, serfs; they were *mainmortables*, holding their little farms in mortmain, or, as we should say, on a life-interest. And these are the men of whom I have said that they lived like freedmen and died like slaves. For, save that they might not marry a woman belonging to another estate except at the cost of a heavy fine (and even then the children were divided between the two landlords), their lot was tolerable; so long as they lived, their lord could ask them nothing beyond their rents and *redevances* ("li seignor ne leur pueent riens demander, se il ne meffont, fors lor cens et lor rentes et lor redevances"). But on their death-bed the scene changes. For the essential characteristic of mortmain is that the lord is the heir of his serf: the estate has been lent to the serf and can never be alienated. "Et s'il muert, il n'a nul hoir fors que son seignor, ni li enfant du serf n'i ont riens." ("And, if

he die, he has no heir save only his lord, nor shall the child of the serf inherit aught.") Their possession died with them, and (though, as the centuries ran on, the right of mortmain was frequently commuted into a heavy death-due) this strange tenure of property flourished in certain parts of France until the outbreak of the Revolution.

Besides the right of mortmain, the feudal lord possessed innumerable seignorial rights: the toll on every bridge, the tax on every mill, on every parish oven; the rights of *hébergement*, which meant that your house was your lord's to come and lodge in at his will; the right of *pourvoirie*, which signifies that he could requisition your horse and your ass, your carriage and your cart, at his own sweet will, for any expedition of war or peace. Should a stranger settle on the land for more than a year and a day, he lost his liberty, became a serf and subject to all these conditions; unless, indeed, the lord had invited him to come to his estate, in which case very favourable conditions were granted him and he was said to hold his farm in *hostise*. These *hospites* were the equivalent of the burghers in the towns.

Above the rank of serf and the condition of mortmain were the *vilains* or free peasants, rare in the early centuries of feudalism, but increasing as the relative security, which the Feudal System brought with it, allowed the idea of individual liberty to arise; until, so early as the age of St. Louis, the land was chiefly worked by these free farmers. They possessed the entire disposal of their goods, the right of bequest, but for all the rest were subject to the same *corvées*, *redevances*, and services as their neighbours who held their land in mortmain—indeed often, as the wise Beau-

manoir observes, their condition was harder, for the lord naturally favoured and strove to enrich the farmer who was nursing up for him a comfortable heritage.

The crops and trees that flourished on these rural estates, where the peasants dwelt in their chimneyless thatched hovels, were far less numerous than those we see to-day. Neither plane nor elm nor mulberry, neither maize nor buckwheat, neither hops nor artichokes nor beetroot nor tobacco nor potatoes. There were, of course, apples; but the fabrication of cider appears to have been unknown in France before the twelfth century.

The condition of these labouring people was hard; but, after all, infinitely less hard than it had been before the establishment of feudal law and feudal force had given every hamlet and every hovel—sometimes, no doubt, a tyrant, but at least always a protector. Then, as now, the saving peasant throve. Then, as now, some frugal shepherd would lay by a penny here, a farthing there, till, with his trifling profits, he could rent or buy a plot of land, a cabin, and a barn. There were always needy nobles, impoverished by warfare or mismanagement, glad to sell. There were always thrifty farmers, able to buy. At every point of the history of France men have been able through their effort and their economy to pass from class to class. This is what the peasant-serfs forgot when they sang (as in Robert Wace's *Roman de Rou*):

> Pourquoi nous laisser faire dommage?
> Nous sommes hommes comme ils sont;
> Des membres avons comme ils ont,
> Et tout autant grands cœurs avons,
> Et tout autant souffrir pouvons.

(Why should we let them do us wrong?
Are we not men, as they are men?
Just the same limbs as theirs, I ken.
As big a heart within our breast,
And just as easily oppressed.)

The people were at last to find an ally against the nobles: the king. But not until the feudal lords had utterly crushed the feeble descendants of Charlemagne. These miserable monarchs were but baubles that the turbulent peers of France used to play with till they broke. They were of infinitely less consequence than a Duke of Aquitaine or a Count of Flanders. The race of Pépin le Bref had come to the throne of France by an act of aggression and a usurper was to snatch its borrowed crown away. On the death of Louis V in 987 the peers of France, assembled at Senlis, preferred to the rightful heir, the dead King's brother, one of their own order, Hugues Capet, Duke of France and Count of Paris. Hugues Capet had no shadow of a legal claim, no vestige of feudal right; but he was a man of parts, brother of the Duke of Burgundy, brother-in-law of the Norman Duke. He came of a line of great captains, of whom more than one had seized a crown. And he was the first of a great line of monarchs who, little by little, were to triumph over those unruly feudal tributaries from whom he sprang and who had raised him to the throne. Over and over again in the history of France we shall find the Capetian kings the fosterers of popular liberty.

There is another sign of the future in that assembly of the peers at Senlis, in which we may read the first stirrings of a new sense that also was to make for the destruction of feudalism. The rightful heir, Charles

of Lorraine, was a vassal of the Holy Roman Empire. Hugues Capet was the Duke of France. And, in preferring a usurper to a foreigner, the nobles of France showed that already, dimly and uncertainly but yet instinctively, they knew themselves the leaders of a nation and descried the rights of a race.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

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Augustin Thierry : *Lettres sur l'Histoire de France.*
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Léopold Delisle: *La Classe agricole au Moyen Age, etc.*
Dareste: *Les Classes agricoles en France, etc.*
Beaumanoir: *Les Coutumes du Beauvoisis.*
Léon Gautier: *La Chevalerie.*
Jacques Bainville: *Histoire de Deux Peuples.*

CHAPTER II

CHIVALRY

I HAVE said that feudalism was a low form of life because it was not a state of freedom, for there can be no liberty when a man's well-being and even his existence are guaranteed by no general law or public protection, but depend on the violence or amenity of a powerful neighbour. There was in the tenth century no central government dispensing safety to all, but everywhere the disordered combat of individual forces, leaders, and bands of soldiers and strong individuals snatching as best they might the fragments of a shattered authority. Out of this welter of anarchy and barbarism, feudalism emerged as a desperate attempt at a real government, a hierarchy and an order. The great feudal nobles admitted at least each other's rights, and composed, not an organized society but at least a voluntary confederation; they recognized, though loosely enough, certain duties towards each other, certain privileges, the same for all. A certain number of men, a confederation of petty despots, under the name of lords and vassals, were solidly established on their own estates, the humbler owing allegiance to the stronger, the greater owing protection to the less, and all of them invested on their own domains, in relation to their own subjects, with an

arbitrary and absolute power. When the weak can only find protection and security in the service of the strong, there can be no freedom; even the lord is a vassal of his overlord, and subject not to the law of the general good but to the caprice of a sovereign. These great lords, protectors of the people, were always ready to wage war against each other; specialized for battle and plunder and rapine, they had no other interest in life. Each stood on his own dunghill, crowing his victory. It seemed as if society, at last reconstituted, would remain void of true civilization, full of honour and courage, no doubt, but also of ignorance and brutality.

Fortunately, in face of these feudal barons, the Church existed! And the Church was mindful of the poor. In the last years of the tenth century she obtained from the military nobles the constitution of a "Truce of God." The *Trève de Dieu* was a close time for battles. There were certain days and seasons when the sword must perforce remain in the scabbard; the Catholic might wage no war between Advent and Epiphany, neither from Quinquagesima Sunday until Whitsuntide; nor again during the month of May, the blessed month of Mary (and this is perhaps one reason why the mediæval poets found the month of May so fair), nor on feast-days; nor in any week might they declare war between Wednesday evening and Monday morning.

This was the Truce; there was also the Peace of God. Perpetual peace must reign in churches and churchyards, on village streets, in mill-yards, and on the king's highway. In places where this peace had been violated the bells might no longer ring nor the Mass be said. And the knight who had broken the

peace was deprived of his *alleu* (the hereditary estate which he might bequeath to his heirs) and also of his *fief*, the feudal lands which he held from his overlord. Thus reduced in time and place, war ran between its banks like an angry river, bordered by scenes of quiet and security.

The Church had done much for the defenceless: priests, pilgrims, monks and nuns, children, labouring people, were no longer exposed to unending ravage. The serf was safe who laid his hands on the stilt of his plough—the plough, like the altar, was a sanctuary. And the Church did more than this. By the institution of Chivalry, a new soul was breathed into the still barbaric body of feudal society.

The origin of this new order, which, all over Europe, appeared to spring spontaneously into life during the eleventh century, was the application of the Christian spirit to certain antique usages and customs brought into France by the Franks and the Burgunds, and evidently of Germanic source. The solemn investiture of the young soldier with his arms, his sacred undertaking to accomplish certain feats, the oath of fealty and homage, the vow to respect women and the weak, these are maxims which exist, more or less, in the oldest runes of Scandinavia; they are but the stuff which Christianity was to fashion into the mystical vesture of the knight.

By the dawn of the twelfth century the code of chivalry was complete; the first duty of the perfect knight was to believe: he must be "all iron without and all faith within"; he must respect the weak and take up, if needs be, their defence in arms; he must love his native country even to the death; he must never flinch before a foe; he must always be ready

to wage war upon the infidel; he must be faithful to his lord and exact in all his feudal obligations; he must be, not self-seeking, but liberal and generous to all; above all, he must never lie; his word must be his bond; he must be everywhere the champion of right and justice. . . .

In fact, we inherit from chivalry our ideal of a gentleman.

Special stress was laid on a true knight's defence of the defenceless. Circumstances have forced me to read some score of interminable mediæval poems of chivalry. This commandment lies at the root of them all: The knight shall never seek his advantage at the expense of the weak. And we remember how St. Louis, King of France, when shipwrecked off the coast of Cyprus in 1254, refused to let himself be saved, with the Queen and their children, in a small galley which the sailors brought from shore for them: "Sirs," said that very perfect knight, "there are on this vessel some five hundred persons whose life is as dear to them as mine is to me. You have no room for them. They will be left stranded off the coast of Cyprus. I would rather share their danger with the Queen and my children than be saved apart!" And the King continued his voyage on the starting, groaning ship, which reached in safety, though slowly, the shores of France.

The code of chivalry was completed by an ingenious system of education, thanks to which the children of every feudal rank were bred in the traditions and raised to the standard of the class immediately above them. At seven years old they were sent to the house or castle of their father's overlord, where, in return for their breeding, they performed certain services of

domesticity, pages and varlets (valet means vassalet), however lofty were their birth. Towards twelve years of age the little lad learned to ride, and to furbish and use his arms. It was now his privilege to follow his lord on his adventures, solid on his horse, carrying a shield and a lance. He was the *écuyer*—the shield-bearer, the squire. But in time of peace the stables were his quarters and your young baron was little better than a groom. A few years later, between sixteen and twenty, the squire was made a knight and put on, for the sacred fast and vigil of his arms, the white tunic, sign of purity; the red robe which symbolizes the blood that he must shed; and the black jerkin that betokens death, the close companion of the knight-at-arms.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

Same as preceding chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE COMMUNES OR TOWNS' UNIONS: RISE OF THE MIDDLE-CLASS

WHILE the feudal nobles reigned uncontested over the woods and fields of France, the old municipal Roman spirit still lingered and strengthened in the towns. The words *curie*, *decurion*, were forgotten, but the magistrature and the town council which they designated were still full of life. The *Consuls*, in the South, the *Jurats* or *Echevins* (Sheriffs) in the North, still ruled the city, subject to many quarrels with the bishop or the count. At Auxerre the count declared for the burghers against the bishop; at Amiens the bishop supported them against the count. If, south of the Loire, where Roman law and Roman customs still prevailed, the cities easily attained their independence, because from time immemorial the bishop there had been their chief magistrate: a *Defensor* rather than a baron—if Toulouse, for instance, counted kings not among her overlords but in the list of her allies—it was far different in the North. There the arrogant spirit of feudalism had penetrated even the Church, and in the towns within the influence of the Rhine or the Meuse the bishops in their pulpits called the burghers of great cities by the name of "serfs." And in all the cities round the Somme and the Aisne,

throughout the ancient stronghold of the Franks, the struggle was stiff and strong, and never really ceased until, in the fifteenth century, the monarchy, at last consistently organized, was strong enough to engulf and assimilate all that was left of feudalism and commune alike.

In the third quarter of the eleventh century the movement began, doubtless by a reaction against the abuse of feudalism, and with an impulse as universal and as spontaneous as that which had produced the birth of chivalry. Le Mans led the way in 1066—an easy date for us to remember, since it is the year of the Battle of Hastings—and Cambrai followed suit ten years later; soon all the North was on fire with civic enthusiasm. Noyon, Beauvais, Laon, Saint-Quentin, Amiens, Soissons, Sens, Reims, all snatched from their overlords their rights and their charters —snatched them with effusion of blood and arms in hand. The citizens met in their churches and market-places, declared themselves associated in a free "communion" or commune, swore to maintain each other in their common rights, to submit to no oppression, and to endure from no overlord the title or the treatment of serfs. "Commune," says Guibert de Nogent, who wrote in the twelfth century—"Commune is a new and odious expression, which signifies that burghers, liable to be taxed at their lord's pleasure (*taillable à merci*), will henceforth pay him once a year the sum they have agreed on, and no more. And for any crimes they may commit they can be fined only according to an established rate."

The liberty which these burghers of the eleventh century fought and died to defend was but a particular and a material freedom: the right to come and

go at will, the right to buy and sell, to leave their fortune to the heirs of their body, undisputed by an overlord, the right to fight their own battles and maintain their own order. It was independence that they sought rather than political freedom. They were purely local. And France was covered, from the Somme to the South, with a sprinkling of small republics, free indeed but most divisible—indeed, with no central interest at all to bind them. It was a progress towards Freedom; the seed of Liberty; but from the standpoint of Unity, it was something of a falling-off.

The centre of town life was the belfry, the visible sign of the commune, which was removed when the commune was suppressed. Its great bell was the voice of public duty; the announcement of fire, or of the approach of the town's enemies, or sedition; and at that clang the burghers of the town would assemble, each bearing his weapons. They assembled often. The establishment of the communes was the first step to freedom, but it did not make for peace. And, indeed, sometimes, in reading these records of endless strife and bloodshed, we appreciate the saying of that old clerk who wrote that there were in the world four sorts of wranglers whose tumult cannot be surpassed: a herd of snorting swine, a roomful of angry women, a chapter of canons, and a commune of domineering rusties, *communia rusticorum dominantium*. The strife between the bishops and the mayors was incessant, at least in the North of France. Veritable battles raged between the municipal and the ecclesiastical forces—battles in which the bishop possessed a formidable arm. For the prelates of the Church ruled with a double title, not only as feudal lords but as guardians of the patrimony of St. Peter,

holding property in trust for a great spiritual corporation. In 1235 the Archbishop of Reims excommunicated the burghers of that commune, damning them with the anathema of a perpetual malediction:

"May they be accursed in the city and accursed in the country!

"Their goods accursed and their bodies accursed!

"May they perish to all eternity!

"May no Christian greet them!

"May no priest say Mass for them!

"May they be buried in the grave of the ass and scattered like dung on the face of the fields!"

This appalling sentence was read in all the churches of the diocese. Nor was this all. The doom was pronounced contagious:

"Whosoever shall have eaten, drunk, spoken, or prayed with one of these shall be excommunicate, even as they."

The burghers of Reims had no weapon in their armoury which could oppose such an onslaught. They took their grievance to St. Louis, who, while securing the Archbishop's authority and upholding his rights, obtained from the fiery prelate a written, signed, and sealed engagement that he would treat the burghers with humanity—a document which the King gave into the keeping of the sheriffs of Reims—and had the anathema removed.

The Church always showed herself extremely hostile to the creation of communes—at least in the North of France. In 1235 the Synod of Paris denounced the "synagogues (that is to say, associations) which usurers and extortioners have constituted in nearly all the cities, towns, and villages of France, which synagogues are vulgarly called communes, and have established

diabolical usages, contrary to the organization of the Church and tending to the upheaval of her jurisdiction."

The Church, even more than feudal lords or jealous king, was the stumbling-block in the path of the communes. If their rise had been rapid, from 1066 to the end of the following century, thenceforward their decline was as swift. By the end of the thirteenth century their condition was almost hopeless. Civic freedom failed. Not only the struggle against Church and feudality and king, but administrative cares, financial difficulties, the public bankruptcy of town after town, destroyed the life of the communes. These little federative republics, with their spirit of sturdy independence, their courage, their enterprise, were doomed to death; but they had lived long enough to nourish in their walls and under the shadow of their belfries the heirs of all their dreams: those "*députés des bonnes villes*," those solid burghers—Third Order of the nation, henceforth assigned as coadjutors to the nobles and the clergy—who, from 1302 onwards, should take their part in the deliberations of the States-General, under a title, obscure at first and modest, but destined to renown: the *Tiers-Etat*. The communes had not lived in vain. They perished, as separate entities, only when the citizens of France were reckoned with and represented in the government of the country.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

Same as before.

LUCHAIRE: *Les Communes françaises.*

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST RENAISSANCE

Poetry awoke in France towards the close of the eleventh century. There had indeed been poems before, but scarcely poetry. Indeed, the earliest poems in France strike us as singularly unpoetical. Even the *Life of Saint Alexis*, so moving in its conception (for Saint Alexis, like Gautama, is a young prince who escapes from his palace and the arms of his bride to lead the ascetic life)—even this touching story is presented without simplicity or grace. Rhetoric and declamation, those bad fairies of French art, were apparently present at its cradle.

But towards 1080—some fifteen years after the Battle of Hastings—there arose a great poet in the land of France. We do not know his name. He was probably (at least this is M. Bédier's theory) one of those wandering minstrels who on fair-days and feast-days used to chant long poems of romance and adventure to the crowds assembled in the market-place, as even to this day they do in the small country towns of Auvergne, where the *patois* poems of my kinsman Vermenouze are so recited. The Middle Ages have left us many of these historical poems or *Chansons de Geste*, but none of them equal the *Chanson de Roland*. To quote a fine phrase of Mr. Strachey's:

"This great work, bleak, bare, gaunt, majestic, stands out like some huge mass of ancient granite on the far horizon of the literature of France."

The old poet knew how to deal with life and death. Quarrelsome, chivalrous, brave to temerity, the knights that he portrayed in the eleventh century are wonderfully like the Frenchmen that we meet to-day. Homer himself could not surpass the death of Roland as he runs forward, feeling the fog in his throat, and throws himself down on the green turf beneath a pine with his face to the earth, and then, in one last impulse of pride and love, lifts his head and looks out towards the great country he has conquered: *Espaigne la Grant.* "And so he falls to thinking of several things: the many lands he has overcome, and sweet France, and the men of his line, and Charlemagne, at whose court he was bred, and the Frenchmen who had such faith in him:

> "De plusurs choses à remembrer li prist:
> De dulce France, de humes de sun lign."

All the modern movement of nationalism, all the cult of "*la Terre et les Morts*," are presaged in that line!

The *Chanson de Roland* is supposed to have been written towards 1080. And then for a hundred years France produced no veritable masterpiece. That nameless old minstrel was like the one bird who, of a summer's night, wakes an hour before the others, to herald the dawn. About 1160 the full concert bursts out in a flood of spontaneous music.

It is difficult to know what causes a renaissance—one of those rare revivals and renewals of beauty and mind, invention and creation, which at long intervals transfigure the world and inaugurate a new order. I

think they are always preceded by much coming and going on the surface of the earth, vast interchanges of ideas and experience among the nations of men. And certainly there has rarely been a wider and freer intercourse, a more continual come-and-go, than during that period of the Crusades.

France was but a little kingdom during the twelfth century. On the east, Provence and Lorraine were fiefs of the Empire; Brittany, on the west, owed an intermittent allegiance, sometimes to England, sometimes to France, and remained practically independent of either. The King of England owned Normandy, Anjou, Aquitaine, Poitou. But the small kingdom of France was full of life and possessed a power of expansion quite out of proportion to its size. If the King of England was the feudal suzerain of much land in France, the mind of England paid tribute to the French. The entire literature of England was French. Not only were the French poets and historians welcomed at the Norman court across the Channel, where their works were widely appreciated, but the inhabitants of England spoke and wrote in French, and some of the oldest and most beautiful examples that we possess of mediæval French poetry were composed in England by Anglo-Norman writers: Thomas, the author of the *Roman de Tristan* (1170), Marie de France (about the same date), Jordan Fantôme and others. And there were other Norman kings in Sicily and the South of Italy, whose courts were also a centre for the culture of France. And the Crusaders bore the influence of their country still further afield. From 1099 until 1187 there were French kings at Jerusalem and French counts at Joppa; the code of laws which they drew up for the govern-

ment of their French subjects in the East is one of the most curious monuments of their time. In 1204 a French Empire was founded in Constantinople; it lasted nearly sixty years. The Emperor's crown was adjudged to Baudouin of Flanders; the Marquis of Montferrat was elected King of Macedonia; Villehardouin was Marshal of Romania (Roumelia), and his nephew, Prince of Achaia. There were dukes of Athens, dukes of Thrace, dukes of Naxos. There were counts of Cephalonia, a sire of Thebes, and a seigneur of Corinth. Delicious titles, that seem to hail from one of Shakespeare's comedies! But they were real enough—were perhaps the most tangible result of the Crusades—for all these little French courts were fostering places and nursery gardens for French culture and for the French language, while, in their turn, they communicated to the mother-country the secrets and the marvels of the East. Trade plied from shore to shore. There was a rich French colony at Saint Jean d'Acre, which, for two centuries, remained a golden link uniting East and West.

There were eight Crusades between 1095 and 1270; and doubtless many of them were irresistible explosions of faith and enthusiasm, especially the first, and those two latter ones due to the saintly and heroic impulsion of Saint Louis. But, in all human effort, there is an alloy. Others were prompted by the desire of wealth; some were political adventures; but, whether holy wars, romances of chivalry, or commercial enterprises, these eight heroic expeditions certainly modified the course of civilization. Their grandeur was fecund and their agitation not in vain, although the heathen regained possession of the Holy Sepulchre. The na-

FRANCE
Before the Crusades
English Miles
0 50 100
ENGLAND
Chichester
Canterbury
Hastings
C. of Boulogne
Longvilliers
C. of FLANDERS
C. of Arras
ARTOIS
C. of HAINAULT
Namur
Liege
B. of LIEGE
Dinant
ROMAN
C. of LUXEMBOURG
Treves B.
Eu
C. of PONTHIEU
C. of EU
Aumale
St. Valery
Fécamp
Amiens C.
VERMANDOIS
Laon
Cherbourg
Rouen
Compiegne
Senlis
Grandpres
Reims
Montfaucon
B. of VERDUN
Bayeux
Caen
DY. of NORMANDY
COTENTIN
Mt St. Michel
Treguier
St. Pol de Leon
C. of Evreux
Alençon
C. of ALENCON
St. Denis
PARIS
ROYAL DOMAIN
Melun
Sens
Troyes
DY. of LORRAINE
B. of Strassburg
DY. of BRITTANY
C. of COURNOUAILLES
Quimper
C. of RENNES
Rennes
C. of MAINE
Le Mans
C. of PERCHE
Chartres
ORLEANNOIS
GAUNOIS
Orleans
Auxerre
DY. of SUABIA
C. of VANNES
Vannes
Belle Isle
C. of NANTES
Nantes
Angers
DY. of ANJOU
Vendome
Tours
C. of BLOIS
Blois
C. of SANCERRE
C. of NEVERS
Nevers
Bourges V.C.
BERRY
BOURBON
DY. of BURGUNDY
C. of BURGUNDY
B. of Bâle
DY. of LESSER BURGUNDY
EMPIRE
C. of THOUARS
Thouars
TOURAINE
C. of POITOU
Poitiers
DY. of AUTAINE
SAINTONGE
Angoulême
Saintes
MARCHE
Limoges
Clermont
AUVERGNE
Lyons
C. of LYONS
Vienne C.
C. of SAVOY
Milan
LOMBARDY
Grenoble
Turin
Genoa
C. of ALBON
C. of ANGOULÊME
Perigueux
C. of PERIGORD
C. of LIMOUSIN
Turenne
V.C. of TURENNE
Bordeaux C.
C. of AGEN
GASCONY
QUERCY
ROUERGUE
Rodez
VELAY
C. of PROVENCE
C. of FOCALQUIER
C. of NICE
Nice
Alby
Avignon
Nimes
C. of PROVENCE
Marseill
Toulon
C. of FERENSAC
C. of TOULOUSE
Toulouse
C. of COMINGES
Foix
C. of FOIX
CARCASSONNE
Narbonne C.
C. of ROUSSILLON
C. of BARCELONA
KING^M of NAVARRE
KING^M of ARAGON
Y. of BEARN
C. of BIGORRE
CORSICA
(to Pisa)
DY. Duchy
M. Marquisate
C. Countship
V.C. Viscountship
B. Bishopric
Bishopric or Monastery

tions learned to know each other: the East was revealed to them; Richard and Saladin saw each that the other was, not a savage, but a very perfect knight. The Crusaders brought home with them new arts: the weaving in figures of silk and linen, and the metal incrustations of Damascus which still preserve the city's name (damask, damascene); the glass of Tyr, which was imitated at Venice; the gauze or muslin of Gaza; the weaving of carpets; the use of cotton; also the invention of windmills, so simple, so efficacious. The Crusaders returned with new plants for their gardens: Saint Louis brought back the ranunculus, the King of Navarre the Damask rose; and new trees for their orchards: the damson or Damask plum; the mulberry-tree, which was so greatly to enrich both Italy and France; and the sugar-cane, which would only grow in Sicily and Spain; and doubtless they brought home microbes enough—leprosy seems to have become more frequent—and a new kind of rat which is now our old black rat. But what they especially brought back was a new crop of ideas.

History dates from the Crusades—that is to say, French History, for Sidonius Apollinaris and Gregory of Tours, though they wrote of French History, did not write in French. Hitherto the vulgar tongue had not served for such grand uses. An illiterate society does not think of chronicling its daily doings in its humble dialect. But when half the feudal society of France was transported to the other side of the world, those who stayed at home did not stint their questions, and those who returned wished to leave their children some record of their marvellous campaign. And so, after several rude attempts, the Fourth Crusade gave

the world the first great modern historian Geoffrey de Villehardouin, Seneschal of Champagne and Marshal of Romania. His *Conquest of Constantinople* (which doubtless he dictated to a secretary) is full of those French qualities of sincerity, regularity, and noble order which we shall henceforth so often find in French literature, and which make us exclaim as we recognize them: "Our neighbours are certainly a Latin race!" And then the Fifth Crusade brought forth a charming example of the quite different type of Frenchman, apparently entirely Celtic; Joinville is as garrulous, as curious, as familiar and indiscreet, as candid and as supple as Montaigne (but not of course as intellectual), full of fine shades and life and movement; and as he describes the "*saintes paroles et bons faits*" of his hero, St. Louis (whom he accompanied to the Holy Land), we feel as though we had come across some lovable, sweet, and yet heroic transformation of the Knight of La Mancha and his squire.

Of all the Crusades, the most profitable to France was the one really odious one: the Crusade against the Albigeois. It was really a war of the North on the South, a struggle between two incompatible civilizations; the feudal, Frankish, fighting nobility of France and that Romania, now sunk in a corrupt if brilliant decadence, which still preserved the traditions of antiquity. The Albigeois were a pretext—a pretext perfectly sincere, for orthodox Catholicism could not tolerate the perverse and aristocratic sect which perpetuated the most dangerous theories of the Gnostics. True, we know the doctrines of the Albigeois chiefly from the account of their enemies and persecutors; the Cistercians; but this account coincides exactly with the teaching of those half-Oriental, half-Slavonic

apostles of pessimism whose demoralizing speculations permeated the heresies of the Middle Ages. They held that the world is evil, and said that, since God is all good, this visible, tangible world is not His work at all, but the creation of some vile competitor and demiurge, whom we abet when we enter the realm of action—if we marry, or work, or enrol ourselves in a church. "And they said, but in secret, that the Christ who was born visibly in an earthly Bethlehem was an evil spirit, but that the real Christ had never eaten, nor drunk, nor appeared to human eyes, for He had been born and died for us in a new and invisible sphere." And to that sphere, only after seven lives of penance and renunciation, endured successively in seven earthly incarnations—only so may, at last, the Pure and the Perfect attain.

The Middle Ages took their religion very seriously, and doubtless the spread of these speculations filled the pious with a holy horror. The theories of the Cathares (the Pure) seemed to have reached the South of France—especially Toulouse and Albi—at the very beginning of the eleventh century and to have spread all through Languedoc; to Poitiers and even to Champagne, rooting themselves in those half-mystical, half-sensual literary cliques and "Courts of Love" where the troubadours had prepared the ground for them by the elaboration of an extraordinary tenuity of sentiment. To them also the invisible and the unpossessed was dearer than all that we can touch and own and know. They, too, said that marriage was incompatible with passion, and the Countess of Champagne proclaimed as a law, "*Amorem non posse suas inter duos conjugales extendere vires.*" Full of ultra-refinement and unreality as they were, these little

courts of Provence, of Languedoc, and of Champagne were, none the less, important to the future: their subtle, mystic, sentimental lore prepared the way for a greater poetry, for a still more mysterious feeling, the love of Dante for Beatrice in heaven, the sonnets of Petrarch to his absent Laura.

All through the eleventh and twelfth centuries Albi, Toulouse, Béziers, Carcassonne had been centres of a brilliant civilization. Luxury, elegance, poetry, political independence, lifted them into another sphere from the rude feudalism of the North. There was a curious antipathy between the two races: the long-haired, rustic Frankish warriors and hunters, and these men of the South, with their music and their manners, "shaved like actors, with their smooth, short hair, their ridiculous pointed boots—men without faith or law—the vainest and lightest-minded of the human kind," as Radulph Glaber described them in the eleventh century. He said, too, that the laxness of their morals corresponded with the heresy of their religious views. And this mutual dislike and distrust persisted from age to age; so that at last, in 1208, the enemies of the Southerners united against them: the Papacy, resolved to exterminate the Manichees; the feudal barons, jealous of the riches and the culture of a chivalry too different from their own ideal; the king, desirous of an effective suzerainty over the South, still foreign in laws, language, manners, customs from the France beyond the Loire.

A crusade was declared against the Albigeois, and the war was without pity. In July 1209, fifty thousand Frenchmen marched against Béziers, and fifteen thousand persons in the town and district alone were put to the sword. The Count of Toulouse—one of

the six fundamental peers of France—was dethroned, like the lords of Béziers and Narbonne. Little by little the King of France annexed most of their possessions, with the provinces of Aunis, Poitou, Périgord, and the Limousin. Before twenty years were out, the monarchy had conquered all the South of France, west of the Rhône, to within four leagues of the city of Toulouse. The royal authority stretched from the Channel to the Atlantic coast. France was one, that, hitherto, had always been twain. There was no longer any Romania in Gaul. The separate civilization of the South had perished; the *Gaie Science* was no more.

But, in dying, the poetry of the troubadours, and all that went with it, fertilized the literature of the conqueror, and, mingling there with another new and strange element—the Celtic Spirit—produced a wonderful efflorescence, one of the most extraordinary revivals of art and letters that the world has witnessed. We know how to trace the influence of the South. But whence came that sudden invasion of the Celtic Spirit? Whence drifted into France that subtle, mystic, sentimental charm? There are few greater problems in literature. Our doctors disagree; Gaston Paris opines that the Arthurian legend penetrated into France from England and the Anglo-Norman poets of the English court; Wendelin Foerster and Joseph Bédier believe that the French courtly poets heard of Guinevere and Lancelot, of Tristan and Yseult, from the ragged wandering harpers of Brittany and Wales who roamed from castle to castle and from fair to fair, chanting to their tiny *rote* or harp, in their uncouth foreign tongue, tales that charmed away the dullness and the chill of mediæval winter.

Is it not likely that the story of the Round Table

filtered down from above, welled up from below, simultaneously? In the *Roman de Renart* the strolling foreign harper says to Ysengrin, the wolf:

"Je fot saver bon lai Breton
Et di Merlin, et di Foucon,
Del roi Artus et di Tristan.". . .
" Et sais-tu le lai Dame Yset?"
"Ya-ia," dit-il, "God is toüet!" (God is to wit.)

But the great ladies, in their fine language, told the same tales as the wandering minstrels from overseas in their abominable jargon; since we know that Chrétien de Troyes owed the inspiration of *his* story about Lancelot (*La Charrette*) to the Countess of Champagne. The poet leaves us no doubt on the subject:

Matière et sens en donne et livre
La Comtesse, et il s'entremet
De penser, si que rien n'y met
Que sa peine et s'attention.

It was probably at the learned, literary courts of Aliénor of Aquitaine (Queen of first France and then of England) and of her two charming daughters: Aélis, Countess of Blois, and Marie, Countess of Champagne, that the civilization of the South fused with the Breton legends imported from England, and produced that marvellous explosion of poetry and romance. Those elegant and amorous little courts had each its laureate. Gautier d'Arras lived and wrote at the court of Blois. Chrétien de Troyes was the glory of the court of Champagne; and Chrétien was a really considerable poet—something akin to Tennyson and Racine—and what is more, after all these years, a really interesting poet. All our con-

ception of the Arthurian legend can be traced to him; he it was, even more than Geoffrey of Monmouth, who turned the savage Breton heroes and queens into feudal knights and ladies who speak *finement* and love *finement*—as people spoke and loved at the court of Marie de Champagne. In his romantic poems, Chrétien is the creator of the French psychological novel; there is but a step between his *Charrette* and the *Princesse de Clèves*. He wrote with a colour, a sentiment, a delicacy, a sense of style, hitherto unknown in "the rustic Roman tongue." The nature of French literature is already defined; its keenness of observation, its interest in things as well as in persons, its sentimental perspicacity, its subtle analysis, its purity of expression. If, in Chrétien, there are passages that seem to foreshadow Racine, there are in a contemporary novel in verse, *L'Escoufle*, descriptions of fashionable life, portraits of places, elegant interiors, oddly mixed with psychological hair-splitting that suggest Paul Bourget.

After the poets came the master-builders. This Renaissance of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is the heroic age of the French cathedrals. First a style of grandeur and simplicity, a transition from the pure Roman (or as we say, Norman) architecture to early Gothic: long rows of tall pillars, cloistered columns in the clerestory overhead, slender towers of many stories: a great impression of nobility and charm. Then in the thirteenth century an ever increasing richness, a huge mass of extraordinarily varied life, a people of statues (550 in the portal of Reims), and all living, smiling, praying, brooding, full of significance and truth; deep, cavernous porches, full of shadow; and the mystical rose of the central window,

streaming with colour and symbolic imagery and wonderful light; vaulted naves and quires a hundred feet high, under whose solemn loftiness man sinks to an insect's stature. The real poetry of the French Middle Ages is builded and carved in stone. But, in kind and style and period, its progress still keeps step with that of the written word; and the Cathedral of Laon is to the Cathedral of Reims just what the *Chanson de Roland*—restrained, severe, sublime—is to the poignant, mysterious, pathetic romance of Tristan or of Arthur.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

La Chanson de Roland.

Works of Chrétien de Troyes, Marie de France, Froissart, etc.

GASTON PARIS: *La Poésie française au Moyen Age.*

La Littérature française au Moyen Age.

Poèmes et Lègendes du Moyen Age.

JOSEPH BÉDIER: *Les Fabliaux.*

M. BORODINE: *La Femme et l'Amour au XIIe Siècle.*

CHARLES OULMONT: *La Poèsie française au Moyen Age.*

VICTOR DURUY : *Histoire de France.*

PRÉVOST-PARADOL: *Essai sur l'Histoire universelle*, t. ii.

CHAPTER V

THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR

At the end of the first Renaissance, France was fairer, richer, freer than she had been for a thousand years, full of liberties, poems, and cathedrals.

The sons of the burghers had their seat in council in face of the nobles and the clergy.

Never since Charlemagne had the king been so powerful.

Peace and order, industry and commerce, art and letters, seem so firmly established; the country appears so quietly and naturally outgrowing the system of feudal society, that we might imagine for the morrow the France of Francis I, when suddenly there breaks out the Great War—the Hundred Years' War—and behold all Western civilization replunged in the abyss.

Yet, as we look closer into that waste of carnage and ruin which is the French fourteenth century, we find in it, none the less, fair and promising spaces; we find in it, above all, the source of two streams of tendency which will augment with every reign and continue to modify the future. They will contribute to the Growth of France, and to discover them is our object in this chapter.

But first of all, let us explain the sudden lapse into barbarism.

Of all the abuses of feudalism, the most disastrous was the doubtful and varying law of female succession, different in every country, almost in every province, and directly responsible for most of the French wars in this and the succeeding century.

Let us say nothing of our own Empress Maud, who bequeathed Normandy to her son, Henry. That son, Henry II of England, married in 1154 the divorced wife of the King of France, Louis VII. . . . When King Louis, that monk enthroned, returning from a five-year-long Crusade, discovered that his wife had beguiled the time of his absence too agreeably in Paris, and forthwith repudiated his Queen, he was more mindful of his honour as a husband than of his duty as a king. For Queen Aliénor was a great heiress. She owned nearly half the South of France, and took with her to the arms of Henry of England Aquitaine, Poitou, Saintonge, Périgord, Auvergne, and Limousin. Henry inherited Normandy from his mother, Anjou, Touraine, and Maine from his father, and he married his son to the heiress of Brittany. . . . Here was a fruitful source of conflict, augmented in the following century when the daughter of Philippe-le-Bel, King of France, married the son of King Edward of England.

The three sons of Philippe-le-Bel all reigned and all died young, leaving no male heirs. In 1328 the throne was empty. There were two claimants: Philippe de Valois, cousin-german of the last three kings, nephew of Philippe-le-Bel and grandson of Philippe III; and Edward III, King of England, grandson of Philippe-le-Bel. Which was the nearest in succession: the son of Philippe's daughter? or the son of the daughter of Philippe's son? The question is nice.

We know how the assembly of Senlis decided in a similar conjuncture. They plumped for the Frenchman and let the lawyers say their say.

Though Edward of England had accepted the hard fact of his kinsman's accession, and had even done him an unwilling homage for his French fief of Aquitaine, yet he continued to brood over his rights—and his wrongs! For there can be no doubt that Philippe VI, jealous of Edward's claim, put many a spoke in the King of England's wheel, both in Scotland and in Flanders. The fatal day dawned when a long-smouldering enmity broke into a flame. On the 12th of July, 1346, Edward landed on the coast of Normandy with an expeditionary force of thirty-two thousand men. He little thought that, with pauses and abatements, the war with France would last a hundred years.

At Crécy, the first onslaught of the English was terrible. Inferior in numbers to the French, the English forces were an army, disciplined, armed, and acting in concert, while in the eyes of the chivalry of France a battle was a tournament, in which every knight fought for his own glory and his own hand. The English set their archers in the first line of battle with the knights well behind, much as in our days the artillery prepares and covers the onslaught of the infantry; the French, in theory, adopted the same disposition, but in the heat of combat, the foolhardy French heroes rode down their own bowmen to get the quicker at our cool islanders, and massacred their own infantry in their eagerness for some marvellous exploit. They fell in their masses: twelve hundred knights, thirty thousand infantry, until a number equal to the attacking force of England lay there dead

upon the ground. For the English fought at Crécy like professional soldiers well equipped with the munition of the time: their arrows rained "fast as snow," and, for the first time in history, cannon were employed to stay and strengthen the bowmen's impetuous attack.

No words can tell the scorn, the anger, of the French burghers who had thought to find in their turbulent and tyrannous nobles at least an inexpugnable defence. Crécy rang the first knell that tolled the end of chivalry.

The French nobles had no better luck ten years later (1356) at Poitiers. Here the French King was taken prisoner: Jean-le-Bon, the son of Philippe VI. As we read of him and our Black Prince in Jean-le-Bel's or Froissart's chronicles, of their gentle courtesy and chivalrous courage, their self-reliance and self-sacrifice, our hearts beat high to hear of such noble knights, as worthy as any hero of antiquity in Plutarch's *Lives*. The accomplished chivalry of the French made, as it were, an aureole round their defeat. We see them in London, feasted like guests in their noble, ample prison, and feel how far more akin they were to any knight of England than to any churl of France. And the churls of France felt that also! And, in their matter-of-fact and simple reckoning, they calculated that a chivalry in captive exile, however gracious, was a luxury that they could do without.

The full price of that luxury they paid at Brétigny in 1360, when the English King exacted the whole dowry of his ancestress, Queen Aliénor: Aquitaine, Poitou, Périgord, and the rest, with Calais, Guisnes, Montreuil, and Ponthieu in the North. In vain the population of these provinces protested. "We may

own the English with our lips [said the citizens of La Rochelle], never with our hearts!" And for a whole year they refused to open their gates to Edward's army.

The States-General were summoned, and met in Paris in 1356. Etienne Marcel, the Mayor of Paris, was one of the deputies; he was a draper or cloth-merchant, the head of the democratic party, a man of experience, courage, and public spirit. Chiefly through his influence, in that hour of rout and defeat, when the chivalry of France had failed her, when the King was in a foreign prison, the States-General assumed the burden of government, meeting four years in succession, forming the mind of the young Prince Regent: it is in some degree owing to Etienne Marcel that Charles V was to prove one of the best kings that France has ever had. Unfortunately, these two rulers, heads of such different factions: the Regent with his traditions of chivalry, Etienne Marcel with his new, dim conceptions of a representative government, fell out, naturally enough, and came to blows. Marcel, who had fortified Paris, bought and installed the Hôtel-de-Ville, instituted a permanent commission of reforms, forgot that the man who means to go far goes slowly. He countenanced a revolution, sought to intimidate, if not to imprison, the Regent, and was assassinated in 1358. But he has left a name in history. Had he succeeded, had the States-General been summoned at frequent intervals, had the King been compelled to consult with them, France would have conquered her freedom. But, going too fast and too far, he disgusted the monarchy with a means of government which had opened the door to revolution. Charles V (who, if he was Etienne's opponent, was also Etienne's pupil) will summon the States-General

again, in 1363, and 1369. But after his death they will meet but fifteen times in the four hundred years that separate the closing fourteenth century from the reign of Louis XVI. And more and more the kings of France will love their own good pleasure in contradistinction to the conscience of their subjects. Milon de Dormans, Bishop of Beauvais, Chancellor of France in 1383, could write the golden sentence: "Though they should deny it a hundred times, kings only reign through the suffrage of their peoples." The words rang true enough in the times of Charles the Wise; they would have appeared rank heresy to Louis XIV.

In the midst of that forlorn French fourteenth century, the reign of Charles V blooms out like an oasis. The war with England continued, with armistices and interludes, but the King contrived to control the civil quarrels and fights of the feudal nobles (of whom so many, fortunately, were prisoners in England), and he rid the country of still more dangerous customers by sending away to fight the battles of France in Portugal the companies of professional soldiers whom a truce with England left unemployed, and who generally, in the interval between two campaigns, ravaged and battened on the unfortunate country that employed them. When war flared out again, the King collected the wealth and the population of France in her fortified towns and camps, and left the already devastated country defenceless to its fate. The English marched through this desert hungrily, found no grange to plunder and no bone to pick, until, tired of starving, they recrossed the Channel, discouraged by their bootless raid; they had scarce seen the face of a Frenchman. If the letters of Petrarch and the

ballades of Eustache Deschamps show us how miserable were the abandoned fields and vineyards of France, the towns, gorged with stores, were by no means unprosperous. They were the hope of Charles; he showered grants and privileges upon them: privileges so enviable that, one by one, the French cities conquered and held by the English King slipped from his grasp, and offered themselves to their own country, until by 1380, of all their Gallic conquests, the English retained only a few ports and seaboard towns: Calais, Cherbourg, Brest, Bayonne, and Bordeaux. For a moment the invasion seemed stopped.

But war and trade were not the sole concern of Charles; he was a student and a lover of ideas: to any young historian in search of a job, I would recommend the growth of intellectual France under the reign of Charles the Wise. Justice has scarce been rendered to the movement and spread of ideas in France between, say, 1360 and 1380; and but for those wars and battles by which we date our histories (yet which, rightly considered, are often merely interruptions to history), the splendid outburst of art and letters which glorified France a hundred and fifty years later might have quietly succeeded to the rule of the Wise King. The Paris of Charles the Wise was little less occupied with antiquity than the Paris of Francis I (it was not quite the same antiquity: Aristotle, Boethius, Seneca were the names to conjure with). Humanists, translators, geographers, historians, were the darlings of the court. The intellectual contact with Italy was established, and an Italian, Christina of Pisa, was one of the great French authors of her time. . . . If I insist on these apparently unimportant details, it is because, in this court of the Wise King, the seed was

sown of moral and mental influences which will more and more affect the growth of France. Every one knows that France went hungry during the Hundred Years' War, that fields were fallow, villages in ruin, roads overgrown and made a wilderness. It is surely as important to date the rise of that half-romantic, half-stoical temper, which more and more will seem to us peculiarly French, and to trace to their source those political and moral ideas which then emerge from the doctrines and dogmas of the Middle Ages. The notion of the State—on the one hand a passionate conception of its unity and absolute authority; on the other hand a no less passionate affirmation of the rights of the private persons who compose it: the Rights of Man, *l'université du commun peuple*—is a twi-fronted ideal that preoccupies and divides the mind of France. In the pages of Gerson, Christine de Pisan, the Monk of Saint Denis, and their contemporaries, there is a warmth of conscience, a sense of political ethics, which has caused an American historian (Miss Maud E. Temple) to compare the philosophers and historians of the reign of Charles the Wise with our own Victorian Radicals, J. S. Mill and his followers.

For several centuries thenceforward we shall watch the great political parties (which then begin to disengage themselves) gradually arrive at their perfection: Absolutists and Democrats fighting at first, as it were, in masks or in mufti; feebly essaying their principles under a disguise as Armagnacs and Burgundians, or as Catholics and Huguenots; while their inner significance gradually deepens and spreads until they learn what they really want and what they really mean; until at last each party in turn possesses the whole of

France, to essay its final experiment, the one with the autocracy of Louis XIV, the other with the Great Revolution.

And then the Wise King died. And France, so near recovered, fell back again into the bottomless pit. For the successor of Charles the Wise was Charles the Mad. The Hundred Years' War broke out anew. The marriage of Charles VI to Isabeau of Bavaria brought up to court a wave of German bad taste and worse morals. And it was not for another century that the sense of culture, art, ideas, revived and formed the great Renaissance.

The chief feature of this second period of the Hundred Years' War was the civil conflict which complicated its horrors. The mad King had a brother, Louis, Duke of Orleans, a man infinitely subtle, gifted, amorous, and cruel. He was the head and front of the aristocratic party: that party which was permeated with the new ideas that, from Italy, had drifted into France—theories of despotism, of the divine right of princes—apologies for the absolute authority of autocrats. . . . The Duke had views of his own on Italy. He had married the daughter of Giangaleazzo Visconti, the Despot of Milan.

He was at the head of the party which first was called Orleanist and afterwards Armagnac: the party of the rich, the party also of the South, those whose ideal was Imperial Rome as opposed to those whose half-conscious ideal was the democratic cities of Flanders. This upholder of the divine right of princes, this head of a strong aristocratic party, would fain have carved for himself a kingdom in Italy (that kingdom of Adria whose phantom history I once meant to write), and though nothing came of his

dream, yet, because of all the intrigues it entailed, the court of Louis of Orleans was a centre for all Italianate influences in France.

Such was Louis of Orleans—

> Tristifer, tristièce portant,
> Et, tout fut il jolis,
> Trop sembloit il mérencolis,
> Qui le cuer a plus dur que fer,

as Burcarius describes him. Over against him we must set his cousin, Jean-sans-Peur (John Dreadnought), Duke of Burgundy, a small, ugly man ("*barbu, brun, et bienaimé,*" says Burcarius), blunt, and brutal as a bull-dog; restless, violent, demagogic as a burgher of Ghent; the blood of his Flemish mother ran hot in his veins.

"And the burghers and people of France [says Monstrelet] adored this Duke of Burgundy, because they believed that, if he undertook the government, he would put down throughout the kingdom all salt-taxes, imposts, levies, and other dues and subsidies with which the people were charged in excess of their conventions."

Already the King had begun to transgress the Budget of the States-General. Five-and-twenty years after the death of Charles the Wise there was no trace left of the prosperity which the Wise King had conjured up amid the desolation of war-ravaged provinces. "Say not the land of France [complains the Rector of the University of Paris whom we know by his *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris*] –Say not the land of France, but rather the Terre Déserte." There was not a village in France but the two factions split it in twain; men looked askance at their neighbours and flung at each other's heads the deadly accusa-

tion: "Armagnac!" or "Bourguignon!" In order to have a man killed (says Juvenal des Ursins), it was necessary to say: "*Cestuy-là est Armagnac!*" And almost every rich person was supposed to be an Armagnac.

Louis of Orleans came to a violent end. On the 20th of November, 1407, his cousin of Burgundy had him murdered in the streets of Paris as he was riding home one night after a supper with the Queen (that sister-in-law of his with whom his relations were the subject of so much Burgundian scandal), but the disappearance of the leader had only inflamed the passions of his party. In the ardour of conflict, Burgundians and Armagnacs alike forgot the English invader, less odious than the hostile fellow-countryman. In 1413 Jean-sans-Peur occupied Paris and took the Bastille. With the butchers of Paris on his right (they were the richest corporation in the city) and the University on the left, eager to fight his battle either with bludgeon or with pen, Jean-sans-Peur feared no one. But set a butcher on horseback! The inevitable defect of the French reformer is to go too fast and too far. Just like Etienne Marcel, the butchers got cross. They sent the Armagnacs spinning but it was the other burghers of Paris who soon tired of their revolutionary tyranny. They recalled the Armagnacs, who re-entered the capital in 1414.

No one seems to have given a thought to the English.

And 1415 is the date of Agincourt!

When, on the eve of battle, the burghers of Paris offered six thousand cross-bowmen, from their communal train bands, to the Duke of Berry, "What do we want with the shopkeepers?" exclaimed one of the Armagnac leaders.

Yet on the 25th of October, 1415 the battle of Agincourt was the third act of the feudal tragedy. After Crécy, after Poitiers, here was another triumph for "the crooked stick and the grey goosewing": the English yeomen with their bows and arrows vanquished again the tempestuous knights of France. Ten thousand Frenchmen lay prone upon the field. But the victorious army was too exhausted to pursue its advantage, and made its way to Calais only to return to England.

The Dauphin of France and the Armagnac leaders were to fight the Englishman's battles as effectually as any yeomen of the shires. And, indeed, from the first the people of Paris laid the whole blame of this immense defeat upon the Armagnacs. The Duke of Burgundy and his party had not fought against the English at Agincourt; his prestige was intact; it was he who negotiated with the enemy. "Had he been in power!" said the populace, and regretted the violence of the butchers. In June, 1418, there was a terrible rising of the masses in Paris; all who bore the name of Armagnac were slain—more than a thousand persons in four-and-twenty hours. The Dauphin of France fled to Melun and thence to Loches. Once more Jean-sans-Peur of Burgundy entered the capital amid the enthusiastic clamours of the people.

Meanwhile the English, restored, refreshed, and alert, had taken Rouen and were marching on Paris. When Jean-sans-Peur proposed a peace, the English King (our Henry V) answered: "Yes!—with the French King's daughter given in marriage! And her dowry shall be Aquitaine, Normandy, Brittany, Maine, Anjou, and Touraine." Burgundy hesitated—for this was more than that dowry of Aliénor which, for so

many centuries, had rendered the unity of France impossible.

What was to be done against an enemy in power, and so preposterous? The only possible course was to spin out the negotiations and gain time, which Jean-sans-Peur did to the best of his ability. In the face of the possible abolition of France, Armagnacs and Bourguignons agreed to bury the hatchet and act together in a sort of sacred union. The chiefs of either party, Jean-sans-Peur and the Dauphin, consented to meet on neutral ground and draw up the tenets of their coalition. A solemn interview took place on the 10th of September, 1419. The two princes, each attended by ten gentlemen, met on the bridge of Montereau, their several armies ranged behind them at some distance along the different banks of the river. What happened will probably always remain uncertain. Although we know the names of the persons present and all the details of the scene, it is difficult to understand what it was that made a serious and courtly conference, in so grave an hour of national disaster, suddenly change and darken into a stormy skirmish. The Dauphin—the young heir-apparent—was but a child of sixteen. His father was mad, and he himself of a nervous constitution. When he saw in front of him the avowed murderer of his uncle, that Jean-sans-Peur whom all his partizans painted blacker than the Devil, did the lad make some inconsiderate, frightened gesture which his followers interpreted amiss? . . . There was a struggle, a cry of "Kill! Kill! *Tuez!*" One of the Dauphin's men took his young master in his arms and carried him off the bridge. When, a minute later, the mass of hurtling figures disentangled, Jean-sans-Peur of

Burgundy was discovered dead, his skull cleft by a blow from an axe.

The tragedy of Montereau proved a profitable victory for the English. In their wrath, their loathing for the Armagnacs, the whole Burgundian party flung itself into the arms of England, and concluded with the invader that shameful treaty of Troyes whereby the Dauphin was declared unapt to wear the crown, and the kingdom of France bequeathed, after the death of its mad monarch, to Henry of England, by virtue of his marriage with the Princess Catherine. A year later the son of that union was born, heir to a double throne, and while he was still in his swaddling clothes his two grandfathers departed this life: Henry the Victorious, King of England; Charles the Mad, King of France.

And the disinherited Dauphin fled to the further side the Loire, where the provinces of the South greeted him as a hero, called him the Avenger of Orleans and the Vanquisher of Burgundy, lauded him to the skies, and made his exile seem a triumph.

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CHAPTER VI

DELIVERANCE

THE chivalry of France had failed the country at Crécy, at Poitiers, and at Agincourt. But a knight was on the road who should redeem their errors, rout the English out of France, and restore the King.

The people of France, mad with wrath and shame, had risen against the knights in ill-combined revolts and insurrections which in no wise harmed the English, but lacerated the martyred body of their country. And now a daughter of the people arose to bind those wounds, to breathe life into a dying frame, to bring peace from without and peace within.

This Maiden-Knight, this saviour of her country was of course Joan of Arc. She transformed her King as she transformed her country; she made of a down-hearted, decadent prince the wise organizer of the monarchy. For France and the French are of such a nature that, when they are confident in their right and might, no miracle of bravery or success is difficult to them, whereas, if you rob them of that intimate self-assurance, their defeat is a foregone conclusion.

For the first five years after the swift-following deaths of Henry V of England and Charles VI of France, the war remained at a standstill, the English

predominating north of the Loire, and the party of the Dauphin in the South. At Windsor, the King of France and England was a little boy: a babe of nine months old when two crowns fell into the cradle. The child's French mother married a squire from Wales, one Owen Tudor (and thus became the grandmother of Henry VII). She had little influence with her son, Henry VI, who was in all things the ward and pupil of his English uncles.

The other King of France, the Dauphin, reigned in Berry: men called him "the King of Bourges." He was a melancholy and disheartened youth; kindly, gentle, pious, interested in books and in experiments, a patron of the new artillery; but to all appearance essentially a private person. His spirit had been broken by the ambush of Montereau and by the ensuing treaty with the English, wherein his own mother had declared him inapt to reign, preferring in his place his sister Catherine (now the bride of Owen Tudor); what wonder if the young man pondered in his heart if he were not base-born? His mother's reputation made the thing likely enough! He seemed no redoubtable rival for his infant nephew at Windsor.

The people murmured that there was no getting sight of him. And in fact by choice he lived sequestered in his beautiful castle of Mehun-sur-Yèvre, one of the wonders of the French Renaissance, stored with the pictures, the coins, the library, the treasure which his uncle, the great collector Jean de Berry, had united there; he lived among these curiosities like one of those courtly *connaisseurs*—some Count of Blois or of Champagne—whose enlightened patronship proved so important to the annals of culture, and of so little account in the history of France.

During those five years a division of France appeared imminent, with the Loire for the frontier line—that Loire which still appeared a suture feebly sewn, which any quarrel, any effort, might rip open. South of the Loire, the Armagnacs were all for Charles; north of the Loire, the Burgundians inclined to England. In those difficult years we see all the latent dualism of France—that uneasy marriage of North and South, of Frank and Roman, of federalism and unity, of the democrat and the autocrat—on which the succeeding centuries will play a score of variations. But then, as more than once before and since, a foreign invasion conjured the peril of civil war.

One day the English Regent awoke to the fact that his hold, south of the Loire, grew weaker day by day, and he remembered that his little nephew claimed the South no less than the North—the South, the veritable heritage of Aliénor of Aquitaine. In an evil hour for them, the English crossed the Loire and attacked the Dauphin in his vital parts. They opened the campaign by the siege of Orleans. We know that which follows: how at first all went well with them—the sixty forts they built round Orleans town, the blockade continued through the winter and spring of 1428, the hunger and despair of the unfortunate townspeople, and how they offered to surrender, if not to England, at least to Burgundy, and how the Regent refused that proposal saying that English blood had won the town and that it was the due prize of English valour. The Dauphin made no effort to come to the rescue, and mused instead upon his own retreat, hesitating whether to prefer Provence or Scotland. . . . For Orleans it appeared the very crack of doom. And yet the town was saved!

For the second time in the history of France a vil-

lage lass of seventeen repulsed a horde of terrible invaders! Joan is indeed the very soul of her nation—all France incarnate in the bright face of a girl! As first she emerges from her enchanted oakwood full of fairy-rings and holy wells and mysterious voices, she seems to us another Velléda, a Druid priestess; but the pious Maid who saves her country by virtue of her faith, of her hope (when no men hoped in France), and of that fervid charity we call compassion—the Maid of Orleans appears the sister of Geneviève, the Gallo-Roman girl who repelled the Huns. And the young knight in armour who rides to aid the King, vowed to a great and desperate "emprise," is surely akin to Roland or to Galahad, or to some knight of the Arthurian tales. And, alas! on the market-place of Rouen, the murdered Maid, the martyred Saint, is it not Blandine who died of old at Lyons?

It is the most wonderful story in the world since that more than earthly story which came to a close on Calvary. . . . I have neither time nor skill to tell it here: who has not read it in the account of Joan's trial? Or in Michelet, or in Quicherat, or in Vallet de Viriville, or in Siméon Luce? Or, again, in the recent pages of Anatole France, or of our own Andrew Lang, or the prose-poems of Charles Péguy? No need for me to write of Joan of Arc. But the briefest survey of the History of France would be incomplete without its passage in her honour.

Her courage and impulse, her gaiety, her faith and her innocence fell like dew on the parched and perishing spirit of King and country. She went to the doubting Dauphin, secretly afraid to count himself his father's son and rightful heir: "*Sire*," she declared, "*en nom Dieu, c'est vous et non aultres!*" She said

she knew it from her heavenly patrons, "Saint Louis and Saint Charlemagne," both Kings of France—and, in the eyes of the Maid, one was as true a Saint as the other. Thus, with a more than royal touch, she healed her prince's secret evil.

When the troops saw that Virgin riding in their midst, seated on her grey charger, her lance at rest, armed at all points as a knight, her black tresses falling thick and short round her pensive, oval face lit up with a heavenly certitude of victory, they thought her a knight out of Paradise, some herald-angel sent to France. "*Semble chose toute divine de son faict, et de la voir et de l'ouïr,*" wrote the Sire de Laval to his mother. As she waved her troops across the Loire, [illegible] the [illegible] with all their might and main, her instinct affirmed the road to victory for any French army; that is to say, attack, fury, sacrifice of self, and absolute faith in a leader.

The spell of terror and hopelessness which had hung like a fog over France was dispelled by the innocent magic of her courage and faith. On the 8th of May, 1429, Orleans was delivered; a little later the "King of Bourges" was crowned at Reims and acclaimed by a triumphant army King of France. The English cause was lost; but the English are obstinate: it took another twenty years to drive them into the sea. Fresh troops poured across the Channel: on the 23d of May, 1430 the Maid herself was taken prisoner at Compiegne. We know how she was carried to Rouen, tried there by our countrymen for a witch, handed over to the tender mercies of the Church as a heretic, and how, on the 30th of May one year later (and two years since that happy May when she had entered Orleans delivered), the Maid was taken to the Old

Market-place at Rouen, her shaven head crowned with a paper cap on which was written: "Heretic, Apostate, Idolater," tied weeping to a stake, and burned alive, and the very ashes of her body thrown into the Seine.

Like Plato's Just Man, reviled, thrown into prison, scourged, blinded, and put to death, yet still enviable, salutary to the State, Joan, on her Calvary, ensured the salvation of France. In 1435 the Duke of Burgundy concluded a treaty with King Charles; soon after, Paris rose suddenly against its English garrison and declared for France; twelve years later, Rouen followed suit; in 1450, the loss of Cherbourg left England not one foot of Norman ground, and the following year deprived her of her last hold on the South. By 1453, the Hundred Years' War was at an end; Calais alone remained to the invaders of all their French possessions—Calais, not Normandy, Maine, Anjou, Paris, Bordeaux, with that land of wine and corn, rich Aquitaine—Calais alone consoled the defeated English. France was now a great power, united, strong, no longer an anarchy of isolated atoms, but organized into a whole.

Of all the miracles of Joan of Arc, the greatest was that she wrought in the heart of her King. The "Gentil Dauphin," the "King of Bourges," the despondent, decadent prince of Mehun-sur-Yèvre, was to be a great monarch and the inaugurator of a new order of things. When the English burned alive the Flower of Chivalry at Rouen, something came to an end in France; and something began. We may place there, perhaps, the close of the Middle Ages.

A French historian (Victor Duruy) takes the later years of Charles VII to mark the opening of the mod-

FRANCE
1328-1453
English Miles
50
50
4°
0°
4°
8°
48°
44°
ENGLAND
Bruges
Ghent
Calais
C. of Guines
C. of Boulogne
Crecy
C. of PONTHIEU
FLANDERS
HAINAULT
LORRAINE
Namur
Marq.
C. of EU
Aumale
Harfleur
Amiens
AMIENS C.
Soissons C.
Sedan
Rouen
Grand Pre C.
DY. OF LORRAINE
ALSACE
Coutance
Guingamp C.
NORMANDY
C. of ALENCON
C. of EVREUX
St. Denis
Rheims
Verdun
Caesclin
Dol
DY. OF BRITTANY
PARIS
BRIE
CHAMPAGNE
Vitry
BAR
Bar C.
Brienne C.
Strasburg
Chartres
Melun
Rennes V.
MAINE
PERCHE
ORLEANS
Etampes
Troyes
Sens C.
Vannes
Courtenay
Nantes
Blois
C. of BLOIS
C. of SANCERRE
Vezelay
Dijon
COUNTY
Constance
ANJOU
TOURAINE
Tours
Bourges
Nevers
NIVERNAIS
Besançon
Poitiers
POITOU
Moulins
DY. OF BOURBON
DY. OF BURGUNDY
FRENCH
Chalon C.
Macon
Geneva
C. OF SAVOY
MARCHE
SAINTONGE
Angouleme
Limoges
V. of LIMOGES
C. of ANGOULEME
C. of FOREZ
C. of LYONS
Lyons
Vienne
Milan
LOMBARDY
Perigeux
AUVERGNE
DAUPHINY
Grenoble
Turin
Bordeaux
AQUITAINE
Valence
MARQTE. OF PROVENCE
Genoa
Agen
Rodez
ROUERGUE
BEAUCAIRE
Sisteron
Avignon
C. of ARMAGNAC
Toulouse
Nimes
Arles
C. OF PROVENCE
GASCONY
LANGUEDOC
Montpelier
Beziers
Narbonne
Marseilles
V. of BEARN
C. of TOULOUSE
Foix
CARCASSONNE
C. of FOIX
ROUSSILLON
CORSICA
Royal Domain
Possessions of the King of England
Feudal Possessions

ern epoch. The France which existed from the time of Clovis and Charlemagne had borne many fruits and done many a deed. That France had elaborated the feudal system, had launched that great enterprise of the Crusades, had instituted chivalry and all the poetry of knighthood, had invented scholastic theology, had built the great Gothic cathedrals; that France is now at an end. The France that begins—the constituted monarchy—will have perhaps a less touching, a less vital, originality, but it possesses an incomparable dignity.

Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo.

This new France, with its organized army, its centralized power, its system of taxes, its new conception of the State—this France which more and more will efface that elder France of chivalry, fiefs, communes, provinces—this France which with every successive monarch gains something in power and grace, from Charles VII to Louis XV—this almost modern France is obviously, not only the Elder Daughter of the Church (as is her boast), but the heir of the Roman Empire in its dangerous tradition of supremacy, of *Monarchia*.

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PART III

THE CENTRALIZED MONARCHY

CHAPTER I

THE RENAISSANCE

THERE are seasons in history when the human spirit seems to bud and blossom—great inventions, glorious discoveries, start into life, and fresh horizons open at every turn. Nations have their Aprils when the world seems to flower with a fortunate novelty. Such a springtime, such an Easter, pervaded all Europe in the last half of the fifteenth century.

Inventions, discoveries, retrievals, and revivals combined to fill the times with new notions, fresh ideas. If Charles VII was able, in so few years, to reorganize the whole system of his armies, suppressing the feudal companies and communal train bands, inaugurating a national army and a State artillery, it was those new cannons that had seemed such toys at Crécy, which enabled the King to centralize his forces. The bombards and bullets of the siege of Orleans were already powerful engines of battle; a little later the generalization of portable fire-arms favoured the increase of regular troops. The knight-errant with his lance, the feudal lord, plated from top to toe and followed by his men-at-arms, even the terrible archers of England, were vanquished by anticipation, no longer a living dread, but a curious survival, powerless in front of the heavy artillery of the State.

A greater invention than gunpowder did still more to inaugurate the modern age. At Mayence on the Rhine, in 1456, a printer named Gutenberg, improving on the discovery of a Dutch inventor, Laurent Coster, of Haarlem, gave to the world, as the result of patient experiment, a Bible printed with movable metallic type in a new sort of press.

The printing-press awoke in Europe an enthusiasm which we may compare to that which in our own times greeted the automobile or the aëroplane. Whole families from generation to generation gave themselves up to the perfection of the wonderful mechanism. At Venice, in 1494, a professor of Greek and Latin founded the famous Aldine Press. At Paris, in 1502, a young French noble, Henri Estienne, tarnished his ancestral shield with a smear of printer's ink and (though his father cut him off with a shilling for it) turned tradesman, founding that illustrious dynasty of the Estiennes which has made his name forever dear to book-lovers. It was good in those days to be a printer, for one had plenty to print. The fall of Constantinople (taken by the Turks in 1453) had dispersed and sent out into exile the learned Greeks and Byzantines who still continued the tradition of antiquity in the shadow of Saint Sophia. They fled for shelter and protection, first to Florence, then to France, bringing their sheaves with them—sheaves of priceless manuscripts, the writings of Plato, of Aristotle, of the great classic dramatists. Aristotle had filtered down to modern times through the perversions and translations of his disciples, the Arab philosophers of Spain, but Plato came almost as a revelation. In the end of the fifteenth century, one Marsiglio Ficino, of Florence, translated into Latin the works of Plato and of Plotinus. It is

impossible to overestimate the influence of this new learning on the religious ideal of France.

This new world of inventions and ideas was doubled by a real, a material New World. On the 12th of October, 1492, Christopher Columbus discovered, as he thought and intended, the eastern coast of Asia; but it was America. In that voyage and two others, rapidly succeeding, he brought into human ken, and under the sway of Spain, a New World, the "West Indies," as America was called at first. I have read in a very early printed pamphlet (an "incunable," as we book-lovers say) of "the new discovered Land beyond the Ganges"; and in fact Christopher Columbus, on sighting land, supposed that he had reached the further side of India—which is why we still call the indigenous race the "Red Indians."

So great a discovery meant a readjustment of all that preceded it; and by its immense increase of Spanish wealth and Spanish power, the voyage of Christopher Columbus disturbed the balance of power in Europe. In the sixteenth century we shall find the great rival and enemy of France to be no longer England, but Spain. There is, however, an interlude between the rivalry of France and England and the rivalry of France and Spain (with the Empire), which interlude was occupied by several successive French invasions of Italy, expeditions which did but little from the point of view of territorial aggrandizement, but which exercised the greatest possible influence on the development of art and life in France.

Italy was in those days the very fount of beauty, the reservoir of all that remained of Greece and Rome: ideas and relics. And certainly it was not in view of completing their education that, for thirty years and

more, from 1493 till 1525, the armies of France streamed across the Alps in recurrent floods; but the diffusion of classic culture was after all the chief result of all their battles. The France we know would not have been the France we know but for those madcap expeditions.

After a hundred years of waste and carnage, France had swung back to the intellectual position which she had occupied under Charles the Wise. Then, too, Italy, antiquity, had occupied her; then, already, Aristotle, Augustine, Boethius, Seneca were names to conjure with; that spirit, half romantic and half stoical, which more and more, as times go on, we shall associate with what is most characteristically French. And then came the Hundred Years' War.

In fact, those revolutions and wars by which we date history are often not landmarks, but obstacles to history. Still, as a river sometimes flows underground for a portion of its course, emerging undiminished, the trend of thought which had taken its rise in the court of Charles V was merely lost to sight during the succeeding century. That preoccupation with the idea of the State, that conception of social unity, the desire of a general education and amelioration for "*l'université du commun peuple*," all that sense of mind and morals and rational progress was not wasted, but was indeed the distant, the unapparent impulse which set in movement the reforms of Charles VII and his son, King Louis.

To the average English playgoer, Louis XI is a personage of a grisly yet comic odiousness, something like a French Hunchback-Richard. But to the student of history this unamiable individual appears as a great king, the precursor of modern royalty: in fact, one of the monarchs that France could least have spared. An

ungrateful and rebellious son, a neglectful, indeed a cruel husband to that unhappy poetess, Margaret of Scotland; a false friend, a treacherous guest, a hypocrite, an egoist, a hypochondriac, and a miser, and with no grace of mind or person to carry off and compensate so many disadvantages (for this great prince was, to look at, the merest lout, with shabby clothes all wrinkled round his crook-kneed spindle legs, and a battered slouch hat throwing a friendly shadow on his long, coarse nose), still Louis XI was a person of parts and a man of power. He was patient and wise, and knew how to draw the maximum of profit from every disagreeable experience. As heir to the throne he had been the friend of the feudal nobles, and had raised more than one revolt against the centralizing government of his father, Charles VII. But when his time came to reign, he turned his coat with a vengeance, and so much so that his outraged associates of yesterday incensed by his cynical apostasy, banded themselves together in an alliance oddly misnamed the League of Public Weal; but in the end Louis got the better of them all. The Universal Spider spread his web (it is the name given him by a Burgundian chronicler: "*l'universelle araigne*"), and in his tangle of wars, treaties, matches and marriage contracts, last wills and testaments, contracts and bargains, he caught all the glittering flies of French feudality and sucked them dry.

And, one by one, he added their possessions to the Crown domains. Between 1472 and 1482 he thus accumulated Armagnac, Alençon, Nemours, part of the great turbulent province of Burgundy, the towns on the Somme, Artois, Roussillon, Franche-Comté, Anjou, Maine, Provence, and therewith the rights of

the House of Anjou to the throne of Naples. Louis XI was the master-builder of French territorial unity. Nor did he neglect the wise administration of the kingdom that he builded. He instituted three new parliaments, at Grenoble, Bordeaux, and Dijon, which brought the King's justice within reach of the people and kept in check the local pretensions of the feudal lords. He created a central Postal Service: a thing that seems so necessary to civilization that we can hardly imagine a world without it; but there had been none in France since Charlemagne, who had for a while revived the Postal Service of the Romans. Louis XI, in 1464, established on all the highroads of France, at stages of four leagues apart, a series of post-houses with relays of four or five swift horses and a postmaster in each; but the jealous King reserved the system for the royal service. He opened countless roads, canals, mines, founded many manufactories, markets, fairs, attracting to France the cleverest craftsmen of the neighbouring countries; he established a printing-press not only in Paris but at Lyons, Caen, Poitiers, Angers; he instituted the provincial universities of Valence, Bourges, Caen, and Besançon. In fact, he prepared the meagre and convalescent kingdom which he had inherited for a great outburst of prosperity and culture; and when, in 1483, he died—always privately execrable and publicly execrated—he had lifted France into the front rank of nations.

Louis left behind him two children, a daughter of twenty-one, a son of thirteen; he had a great opinion of his girl, and left her Regent of France during the minority of her brother. Anne of Beaujeu was a type of Frenchwoman who has been frequent in every age, managing, masterful, economical, prudent, devoted.

She married her little brother to the heiress of Brittany, in the teeth of the bride's opposition. And so, as a peasant farmer adds field to field and vineyard to vineyard, the father and daughter between them compacted the kingdom of France.

The son was of a different type; men called him Charles the Affable. He was the harum-scarum young Frenchman we so often meet, ugly, expressive, pleasant, friendly, brave, and eager for romance. He had lived all his life far from his father's court, reading the *Rosier des Guerres* and countless romances of chivalry, in his castle of Amboise. Of all his father's inheritance, that which appealed the most to this vivacious yet dreamy, unpractical young man was just that one item by which the prudent Louis set no store: the claims of the House of Anjou to the crown of Naples. In 1494, the King (four and twenty years of age) crossed the Alps in a tumultuous rush, dragging over the mountains with him forty of those new cannon which were as strange and terrifying to the Italy of his times as the German Zeppelins or the English "Tanks" are to our own. What a surprise to the Transalpine princes, accustomed to the leisurely, methodical battles of their Condottieri, as regular and almost as harmless as a game of chess—what a terrible revelation was this mad, destructive inrush of the French! They called Charles the Affable the "Scourge of Heaven." The invasion of Italy appeared even to contemporaries a miracle. The young King, ill-advised, without generals, without money, leading the impromptu army of a moment's whim, traversed hostile Italy as glorious as Charlemagne. A horde of young Barbarians they must have seemed! We know how the French soldiers shied stones at Lionardo's statue of Duke Sforza at Milan and broke

the priceless masterpiece to bits. But if they were rough and rude, if the Italian tyrants, who so long had coquetted with France, deplored their advent, the common people everywhere welcomed the army and cried: "*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini!*" The women brought their jewels to pay the troops; the men threw open the gates of the cities, every difficulty was overridden; for, says Comines, touched with the grave exaltation of the hour, "God Himself was our leader: *Dieu monstroit conduire l'entreprise.* At our first arrival [he goes on] the people honoured us as saints, supposing all faith and virtue to be in us; but this opinion endured not long."

For there reigned a great wickedness in the beautiful cities of Italy, and the people took the French for an army of deliverers. Let us take not only the testimony of the French, but, out of a cloud of witnesses, the words of Marin Sanudo, the Venetian Secretary: "There is no city in Italy [says he]—not Rome or Naples, not Milan, Florence, Bologna or Ferrara, nay, not my own Venice even—that is holier than the cities of the Plain!" But how beautiful were Sodom and Gomorrah! What angels painted in the chapels of Florence, where Savonarola in the pulpit welcomed with his fiery eloquence the coming of the French! And Milan, with the frescoes of Lionardo fresh upon the wall. And Ariosto at Ferrara! And Venice, where the girl Madonnas of Gian Bellini were not yet all begun! And the Pope at Rome was Borgia! And the preacher at Florence was Savonarola!

Among all this strange extravagance of beauty, vice, and virtue, the King of France moved like a quaint elfin child, "A quite uninstructed person [wrote the Milanese Corio], though none the less able to address

his soldiery in such telling terms that they rush upon the enemy crying, 'Alive or dead!'" And the young French lords innumerable who accompanied him, and all their soldiery, made a wonderful progress to Naples, where Charles was crowned King of Naples, Emperor of the East, and King of Jerusalem. The ugly, bright-eyed youth projected a Crusade. But a rumour of an anti-Gallic League of those very States which had welcomed the French so fervently sent Charles and his army back across the Alps. That was the first of several French invasions of Italy. A few years later Charles was to die of an accident at tennis; his cousin and successor, Louis XII, remembered his grandmother, Valentine of Milan, and led another army into Italy in pursuance of the French claim to Milan. And the same fantastic claims led his heir, Francis I, more than once into Lombardy, where he scored a great victory in 1515, and ten years later was taken captive at Pavia. The reverses and the successes of France in Italy were alike ephemeral. What really mattered, what really contributed to the growth of France, was the impression of Italy that the French brought away with them: an immense enlargement of the moral and artistic faculties the one stimulated by the beauty and the science of Italy, the other shaken and awakened as by the spectacle of a shocking example. For the very same great lords who bought Lionardo's pictures and Ariosto's poems were poisoners, employers of paid assassins, adept in unnatural vices. It was borne in upon honest France that there is something worth more than all that Fairyland can show. As Rabelais wrote, voicing the sense of his time in immortal words: "*Science sans conscience est la ruine de l'âme*"—"Knowledge bereft of conscience is the ruin of the soul."

The thirty years' war which France waged on Italy did more for the mind of the nation than the Hundred Years' War with England. The English occupied France without modifying it. The French kings brought back with them personalities of such genius that they grafted new conceptions on the stock of France. When Francis I invited to Fontainebleau the master-painter Lionardo da Vinci—sculptor, architect, physicist, engineer, writer, musician; when he turned his French manor into a wonderful Italian palace, with Andrea del Sarto, Benvenuto Cellini, Primaticcio, for its decorators; when he founded the College of France and welcomed there the humanists and scholars left shelterless by the fall of the Republic of Florence; when he married his son to the Pope's niece, Catherine dei Medici, the Florentine; when French authors translated Petrarch, Tasso, Boccaccio, Macchiavelli (the gods of the Italianate court), the invasion of France by Italian culture became complete. Those old, vain raids on Milan had been after all more important than many a successful war, and in a mood of fancy we might suppose that the snake uncoiled upon the shield of the Visconti had renewed the temptation of the primal Serpent. France, at its bidding, like Adam, had eaten of the Fruit of the Tree.

And, as in the earlier Renaissance, this invasion of foreign germs produced a marvellous blossoming of native genius. This is not the place to write of the French Renaissance, but I must at least, in passing by, salute two great names. (Could one write of Elizabethan England and never mention Shakespeare?) Rabelais's *Life of Gargantua* is an orgy of Life, inexpressibly coarse, and yet full of poetry, a foul and glorious paean in praise of the energy of Nature. The French,

who are so fine, so delicate and exquisite, are yet sometimes coarse with a surprising coarseness: an unexpected filth that the English imagination boggles at. But Rabelais is their master in this line. Yet so great was his love of Life, so deep and hearty his Pagan philosophy, so ardent his wish to liberate the intelligence of man, to enfranchise his instincts and ensure his freedom and his happiness, and so contagious is his rollicking laugh, that, as we shut up the book, we murmur to ourselves: "Whom have we here? Is it Falstaff, Caliban, or Prospero?"

Rabelais's story (like Cervantes's *Don Quixote*) was begun as a skit upon an old mediæval novel. The story is nothing, the stuff of no importance; the priceless value of the work lies in its embroidery: all the rushing, gushing, incoherent welter of fun, philosophy, learning, wit, imagination, in a magical medley of words. The revolt of Nature against Grace, the claims of the body as opposed to the soul, the belief in a beauty and a harmony immanent in all the natural courses of life, the hatred of what he calls "Antiphysie," and what we perhaps might call metaphysics, have never been expressed with a more unconquerable conviction. Rabelais was a medical student for years before he became curé of Meudon, and his genius keeps the mark of the sawbones and the apothecary.

The discursiveness, the scepticism, the egotism of Rabelais are present in the other great name of his age, Michel de Montaigne, who, feeling he had so much to say about life and things, very wisely gave up any attempt to tell a story and merely gave us his views and meditations, inventing a new form: the Essay.

Montaigne was a man of free and meditative mind, as little trammelled by custom and superstition as

Rabelais himself; like Rabelais, something of an anarchist, much of an epicurean. But, unlike Rabelais, he finds something superior to the beauty and harmony of Nature, and that is the mastery a man may gain over his own mind and over circumstance and fate: in fact, Montaigne, the "soft and slack Montaigne" (as Pascal calls him), the loose and lax Montaigne, as we are all inclined to think, was, in his deepest heart, a Stoic. It is, I think, this mingling of free philosophy and natural grace with something firm and stoical at bottom which makes him so characteristically French and (to my humble thinking) one of the most delightful authors in the world. But Montaigne has always been beloved in England. Owing perhaps to the fact (as I think Sir Sydney Lee was the first to point out) that Lord Bacon's elder brother settled at Bordeaux, was an intimate friend of the French philosopher, his works passed early to our English thinker's hands, and Montaigne's *Essais* gave the pattern to Bacon's *Essays*. The marvellous translation of John Florio soon rendered the Frenchman almost as popular in England as at home; there can be little doubt that Shakespeare studied him; and from that day to this it is doubtful if any foreign author has had, in our studies and among the meditative, solitary sort, a more appreciative public than Montaigne. The character of the philosopher is akin to our phlegmatic, liberal English temper; he declared himself our "cousin" and inclined to think that the original Eyquems of Montaigne were immigrants to Bordeaux from our isles.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

MICHELET: *La Renaissance.*
MARQUIS DE BEAUCOURT: *Histoire de Charles VII.*

COMMINES: *Mémoires.*
MADAME DUCLAUX (Mary Robinson): *The End of the Middle Ages.*
VICTOR DURUY: *Histoire de France.*
CORIO: *Storia di Milano.*
Diarii di Marin Sanudo, etc.

CHAPTER II

THE WARS OF RELIGION

FRANCE could not continue to linger in the school of Italy. All her energies for the next two hundred years will be absorbed by her struggle, a real life-and-death struggle, with Spain and the Empire.

The difficulty of understanding the development of France during this period is that her foreign policy and her home policy are almost constantly contradictory: she is like one of those machines whose wheels turn, some in one direction, some in another; one would think it ought to stand stock-still, like two rams butting one another; yet the machine works. And this difficult period is one of constant growth for France. Despite its wars and its catastrophes it embraces (in a first act, as it were) the reign of Francis I and the reign of Henry Quatre; and then what we must call, after Voltaire, the century of Louis XIV.

In this chapter I shall deal merely with the sixteenth century and with that earlier rivalry of France and the Empire which came to an end in the triumph of France on the accession of Henry IV. But Richelieu, Mazarin, and Louis Quatorze will still have three long lives to spend in stamping out the ashes of those ill-extinguished fires. Indeed, from early in the sixteenth century till the beginning of the eighteenth, the great

affair, not only of France but of Europe, was: Which shall be the leader, France or the Empire?

The Empire was of course the Empire of Germany —the "Holy Roman Empire of Germanic Nationality" —much less German than Austrian, for although nominally elective, the Empire was in fact, for many hundreds of years, a fief, as it were, of the House of Hapsburg. When, in 1519, the Emperor Maximilian died, his grandson and natural heir was Charles V, the youthful King of Spain.

But the Empire was still supposed to be elective, and, in fact, a form of election was regularly gone through, candidates presenting themselves with a great flourish of credentials, and (though the farce always ended in the choice of a Hapsburg) the election of an Austrian was not absolutely a foregone conclusion. And the election of a King of Spain to a throne which already controlled both Germany and Austria, Lorraine and the Netherlands, Flanders and Alsace, with claims to Milan, Naples, Navarre, and Burgundy—such an overwhelming preponderance accorded to one royal House would so evidently upset the balance of power in Europe that the election of 1519 promised at last to be serious.

Three kings presented themselves, all young, the first of their rank in the world, for the consideration of the seven princely Electors. They were Henry VIII of England, Francis I of France, Charles V of Spain. And the German princes chose Charles of Spain, the Hapsburg.

Now let us open a map and see how the possessions of this new Emperor surround and stifle France. To the east, from the Channel to the Alps, reach the Netherlands, Flanders, Franche-Comté, Lorraine, Al-

sace (all Charles's), with at the back of them the German Empire; he contests the Italian frontier; on the south-west he owns Spain; and, in right of his grandmother, he is a claimant to Burgundy, Artois, and Flanders.

France lay in his grip! Let us suppose that in the present age, by some strange chance, an Emperor of Russia, already King of Poland, with rights and pretensions to the crown of Italy, should be elected President of the French Republic and King of Belgium. Even so, the Central Empires of 1917 would not be as closely surrounded by their arch-enemy as sixteenth century France was by the heir of the Hapsburgs.

This one glance at a map explains all the foreign policy of France, compelled to intrigue with the Turk (that arch-enemy of Austria), to coquet with England, to approach the Protestant princes of Germany—in fact, to invent and elaborate a great Liberal League in order to counterbalance the immense orthodox forces of Austria, Spain, and the Empire. The friends of France abroad are the Turk, the heretic, and the infidel. And yet France is a great Catholic power, distraught with her own heresies, a house divided against herself.

In the middle of the sixteenth century at least one-fifth of France was Protestant; in some provinces far more; one-half of Burgundy and three parts of Bearn; and the effort of the French kings was to reduce these Protestants by every form of battle, murder, and sudden death: to exterminate these heretic subjects, who were, in France, almost a separate Republic, a State within the State, and yet who were of the same religion as the foreign allies of France. The very sovereign who negotiates an alliance with Henry VIII or

Queen Elizabeth, or a treaty with the Lutheran princes across the Rhine, is, in his own country, the enemy in arms of the upholders of the Church of his allies. The situation appears inextricable, unless we remember that what we call the wars of religion were in fact political wars.

The monarchy had grown very strong in France under Louis XI, very splendid under Francis I; and also, by reason of the frequent invasions of Italy and the constant infiltration into France of Italian culture, the monarchy had grown Italianate. The son of King Francis married a Florentine, and, for fifty years, at the court of Catherine dei Medici, Italian culture reigned. Gradually around her there was formed a sort of Italian kernel to the court: an inner council from beyond the Alps. There was Gondi, the Florentine, who became Duc de Retz; there was the Milanese Birago, the magistrate who became Chancellor of France; there was also Strozzi, the Queen's cousin, ready to conduct her armies; and Gonzaga, son of the Duke of Mantua, who by his marriage became the French Duc de Nevers. All these and many more were the ardent adepts of the absolute Italian theory of government.

Macchiavelli was their great man; we know that Catherine's son, Henry, listened every night to a chapter of the *Prince* read aloud to him ere he slept, as good Huguenots listened to a chapter of the Scriptures; and doubtless his mother was no less well informed. Not only in the great Florentine, but in all their Italianate jurists and legists, they found material to nourish their conception of a king. It was the old Roman conception of the monarch as the supreme, almost divine expression of the State: the king can do no

wrong; his will is law; he is the soul of his people and they exist to serve him. None shall worship at another altar than the king's nor think any private or public duty so sacred as his good pleasure. No property of any individual, no privilege of any province, no liberty of any city, had any rights or sanction save His Majesty's consent. Against his express command, his subjects could have no defence and no redress. Such theorists saw little difference between a heretic and a rebel.

And in truth a Huguenot was often, if not a rebel, at least a Constitutionalist. There is a deep Republican instinct in the soul of Protestantism. At least, for the most part the Huguenots held that, if the monarchy degenerate into a tyranny, it is the duty of subjects not to submit, but to warn their sovereign of his excess and to correct the error of his ways. Like Milon de Dormans, two hundred years before them, they said: "The king reigns not by a right divine, but by the suffrage of his people." If we wish to see their point of view, let us open the books of their poet and leader, Agrippa d'Aubigné (his *Tragiques*, at any rate, may, I believe, be bought for a very small price: at every page of his *Memoirs* we shall find some weighty sentence:

Il y a une foi obligatoire entre le roi et ses sujets. . . .
Le prince que rompt la foi à son peuple rompt celle de son peuple. . . .
La puissance du prince procède du peuple.

(The king and his subjects owe a duty to each other. . . .
The prince who breaks his faith to the people forfeits thereby his right to their allegiance. . . .
The power of the prince proceeds from the people.)

Thus Aubigné and the Huguenots opposed to Macchiavelli the old Gallican theory of monarchy, indigenous to the soil. In the ears of Catherine dei Medici's Italianate council it rang with the sound of treason, and, in perfect good faith, autocratic Catholics and democratic Huguenots massacred each other as debasers of the moral currency of the State.

I do not deny that the Huguenot gentlemen who swung from the balconies of the castle at Amboise were martyrs to their faith; but they died chiefly because they had failed in their attempt to kidnap the young King. It was a plan that Coligny avowed. And other Huguenots would calmly have taken the crown from the Valois to place it on the brows of another Bourbon, their leader, the Prince of Condé, for whom they struck a medal with this inscription: "*Roi des Fidèles*": "King of the Faithful."

Not only were the Protestants naturally Republican, or at least Constitutionalist—not only did they profess (as Jurieu, their jurisconsult was soon to formulate it) "que le peuple est le premier souverain; et que la souveraineté y demeure toujours, non seulement comme dans sa source mais encore comme dans son premier sujet"; in addition to this inherent instinct of democracy, we must not forget the suspicion which attached to the Protestants on account of their supposed affiliation to the Anabaptists of the Low Countries. So, in our own times, in a country under autocratic government, a Liberal movement might, by a not unnatural confusion, be suspected of Nihilist tendencies, and persecuted on that account. In perfect honesty on either side, a civil war, in fact as political as our war of the Cavaliers and the Roundheads, devastated France for more than thirty years, usurping the name and the

principles of religion. The horrors of the Hundred Years' War were renewed:

> O France désolée! O France sanguinaire,
> Non pas terre, mais cendre!

writes Agrippa d'Aubigné in his *Tragiques*. And he records how he saw in a vision his country, France, bearing in her arms two twin brothers, who fight like deadly foes and lacerate their nursing mother's breasts, spilling her kind milk, tearing her tender flesh, until the anguished martyr cries:

> Je n'ai plus que de sang pour votre nourriture!
> (I have no milk to give you, only blood!)

Yet there were those in France who deplored the struggle that knit the sons of France in so deadly a grip; Catholics like Ronsard, who bewailed the stains and smirches on his crucifix:

> Un Christ empistolé, tout noirci de fumée;

Protestants like Henry of Navarre, who fought for their faith and yet held that the fairest of victories was for brethren to dwell together in amity. There was a Montaigne, with his wise and meditative mind. There was a Michel de l'Hôpital, who denounced civil war as wicked and unnatural. Nay, the very Queen-Mother herself, Catherine dei Medici, aspired to peace and harmony. In 1570 the reign of concord seemed at hand. The struggle with Spain was acute, and naturally sent the French Government to the further swing of the pendulum—towards England and Holland; there were great negotiations for marrying one of Queen Catherine's sons to Elizabeth of England; the

young King, Charles IX, took for his mentor the Protestant chief, the Admiral de Coligny; and Catherine married her daughter to Henry of Navarre, the Prince of the Huguenots, who, after her own three sons, stood next in succession to the throne of France.

Pope's niece though she was, Catherine was no bigoted Catholic, no martyr for her religion, like Mary Queen of Scots. She was an unfanatical Italian; doubtless, like that other Italian, Cæsar, she thought these Gauls too much addicted to religion; and certainly she deplored the appalling waste and ravage of her children's property, the kingdom of France. These ruined provinces no longer paid their expenses: the Queen had, if I may say so, household cares. The annual cost of the kingdom was seventeen millions and the incomings not quite three! Doubtless, if by raising a finger Catherine could have delivered the country from Catholics and Protestants alike, that finger would have been raised.

She sought at least to play the two parties one against the other, leaning now to this side, now to that, in an impossible attempt at equilibrium. But the violence of the times was too great: she could be sure of neither party. In August, 1572, when most she appeared to incline to the Huguenot faction (at that time assembled in Paris to celebrate the marriage of their prince with the young King's sister), she seems to have been suddenly startled by some rumour of a Protestant plot to capture the King, and trembled anew, demoralized by terror.

At that moment, I imagine, she must have cast her eyes on the book that was the political Bible of the Medici: Macchiavelli's *Prince*. Or did she need to open it, knowing it so well by heart? Therein she

could read the danger of such a system as that which she had recently applied—the perpetual shilly-shally between irreconcilable interests. . . . The doctrine of Macchiavelli is not unlike that which has inspired the Kaiser in the war of 1914-18—it is the apology for absolute power, the right of a king to exercise cruelty in order to enforce obedience: in fact, the theory of "frightfulness." It is a theory which has a certain unholy fascination in print. But, when applied . . . Well, we remember the effect on Europe of the German ravages in Belgium. . . . Catherine, too, was doubtless taken aback by the result of her recipe for good government, when no longer meditated in the study but put in practice on flesh and blood.

Macchiavelli maintains that cruelty is legitimate on the part of a prince if it be employed in the interests of order and only once, in a single stroke, by a *coup d'état*, intended to secure the direction of affairs. The blow must fall sudden and dreadful, must teach by terror, vanquish by victory, and never need to be repeated . . . and it must be succeeded by a long and mild sequence of public benefits, which follow after the thunderstroke like the gentle, fertilizing rain. . . .

It is, as I say, the policy of the Germans in the invaded provinces of Belgium and France. In our father's time it was the policy of Napoleon III. And a modern writer has been found to advocate this "*opération de police un peu rude.*" But no man, not even the Kaiser, ever applied it so thoroughly as that trembling mother, that weak woman, Catherine dei Medici.

Her utter devotion to her sons gave her a great influence over them, and her terror made her eloquent.

She persuaded her half-mad poet of a son, the King —Charles IX—that his friend Coligny had a plot against him (and, indeed, who knows? that may have been true, for had not Coligny plotted to kidnap the King's elder brother, Francis II, the husband of Mary Queen of Scots?), and then, out of fear, and falsehood, and a woman's mad impulsiveness, the appalling order was given to massacre the Admiral and his six hundred gentlemen and their servants and followers (some two thousand people in all), and as many more as might be of the Protestant professors, doctors, tradespeople and mechanics, at that moment more than usually at their ease in Paris, on account of their Prince's wedding and of the new friendship between Coligny and the young King. . . .

That unimaginable crime was ordered and executed . . . more or less, for—though some twenty thousand were slain in Paris and the other towns of France—yet many escaped, and among them Henry of Navarre, the future Henry IV, the future idol of the French nation. The massacre was applauded by the King of Spain (the national enemy), and almost accepted by the Queen of England, who protested, it is true, yet stood godmother in the following year to a French royal babe, and resumed her negotiations for a possible marriage with a French royal prince, who was to turn Protestant before his wedding and bring with him (wrested from Spain) the Low Countries as a dowry into England.

The Inquisition struck a medal of the St. Bartholomew to commemorate the great and glorious event. And the Huguenots, naturally, seeing the construction to be placed on peace, broke out again in war. And the King died within two years, of sheer horror and

nervous collapse, muttering to his old nurse—his old Huguenot nurse: "Blood! Blood! *Que de sang!*" But on the whole, when we peruse the documents of the time we are astonished rather at the slight effect of an event which has never since ceased to thrill the world with horror and loathing—which has injured so desperately the fair fame of France and left so deep a mark in history. I suppose if you were to ask the man in the street what he remembers of French history, he would reply: "Joan of Arc, the massacre of St. Bartholomew, Versailles, the French Revolution, and Napoleon."

Yet this capital event brought about no great result, unless it were to sicken the country with civil war. No country can go mad for more than a certain time. A dozen years of battle had ruined France. Thousands of villages were reduced to ashes; the grass grew over the rutted, disused roads; the two broken halves of the fractured bridges appeared to lift up their arms to heaven in protest. And the streets were full of the halt, the maimed, and the poor, who begged their bread from door to door and slept among the tombs in the cemeteries.

The end was not yet—and not for many years; but already, between the two extremes of public passion, a new party grew and increased: the Moderates, the "*Politiques.*" Did not the wise Montaigne affirm to the historian, de Thou, that Henry of Navarre was no Protestant and Guise no Catholic? The time came at last when it was for France a question of Peace or Death; when both the King (Henry III) and his heir, the King of Navarre, were bent on peace; and yet the land, distraught by too many rancours, could not settle down in quiet, but went maddening on in its insensate vendettas.

And then a strange thing took place: the Catholic party—the party of absolute monarchy—forsook the King. Henry III had no direct heir; his successor in law would be Henry of Navarre, the "murdering Protestant" as they would say in Ireland. And in view of so dire a consequence the Ultra-Catholics formed themselves into a League. From 1586 to 1596, France was really governed (inasmuch as it was governed at all) in the North and in the big towns by this League, and, in the Federalist, "Home-Ruler" South and West, by the organization of the Protestant "Cause." France seemed in danger of separating in twain.

The doctrines of the League out-Huguenoted the Huguenots by their political audacity. The Leaguers wrote to the Pope: "We are jealous of the honour of God and of the antique glory of France. We are born Frenchmen, not slaves, Catholics, not Calvinists." And (just as passionately as Agrippa d'Aubigné) they argued that the King was only King, "*en vertu du consentement de tous.*" They maintained that there exists a tacit contract between the sovereign and the nation—a pact which at any moment may be revised. And (just as the Protestants struck a medal for Condé with the inscription "*Roi des Fidèles*") so the Leaguers offered the crown to another Prince of the royal race, that Duke of Guise who had organized the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and, after his assassination, proposed to seat in his stead on the throne of France a daughter of the King of Spain.

So deep in the mind of France abides the conception that kings only reign by virtue of the will of the people.

What would have happened if France had then abandoned the principle of an hereditary monarchy?

Would France have become a dependance of Spain? The charm, the prestige, the natural authority and grace, the timely conversion of Henry of Navarre saved the situation. France may well idolize the memory of Henri Quatre! He brought into that Bedlam of senseless strife such a breath of good sense, gaiety, courage, stoical endurance, love of realities and happy moderation, as showed France in a vision her own true image, and chased the fanatics and the phantoms afar. It seems strange indeed that this most human and most humane of princes should have been the cousin and the contemporary of those morbid, half-mad, ghastly sons of Catherine dei Medici and great-great-grandsons of Valentine Visconti. The King of Navarre—gay, prudent, economical, brave, practical, alert—seems separated from them by a gulf of centuries; seems, in fact, a Frenchman of to-day. *His* book of devotion was not Macchiavelli's *Prince*, but a manual of country life and rural economy: the *Théâtre d'Agriculture* of Olivier de Serres; every day he listened to it for half an hour. We know his wish —the wish of a poor man who had often gone hungry —that every farmer in France should have a fowl in his pot o' Sundays. He loved the land, and he loved the common people, and would have said, as Sully, his friend and minister, said: "The pastures and the ploughland are the two breasts of the State." "No landscape in the world," said he again, "is so fine a piece of scenery as a field of corn at harvest time, ripe for the cutting."

Essentially realistic, Henry IV put the substantial facts of this world before whatever charter or map his fancy and his faith had drawn of the invisible sphere beyond. When he found that, as a Protestant, he

could not, despite his claims and titles and his right divine, make himself acceptable to the majority of his subjects, he did as Clovis had done long before: he entered the Church of his people. "Paris is worth a Mass!" he said—"*Paris vaut bien une messe!*" But he did not forget the old faith in adopting the new. He showed himself the grandson of the tolerant, gracious, free-minded Margaret of Angoulême. By the Edict of Nantes, if he proclaimed the supremacy of the Catholic Church, he secured the liberties and rights of Protestants. Henceforth the disabilities of dissenters were removed and they were admitted to all the charges of the State; was not Sully himself a Huguenot? There was a sort of Home Rule for Protestants; they had their seats in Parliament, their towns and castles governed by their own principles. And, wearied out, ruined, devastated by thirty years of civil war, the nation accepted peace. Henry IV had only now to conquer Spain.

There too he was successful. The Spaniards, allied with the Ultra-Catholics of France (the League), had sought to wrest the crown from Henry and to place on the throne of France a Spanish princess. But (just ten years after the defeat of the Armada and our own English triumph, and in the very year of the Edict of Nantes, which established peace in France) the French King, victorious over all his enemies, forced the Spaniards to sign the Peace of Vervins, and terminated, by a transaction in which France had distinctly the advantage, a rivalry that had lasted eighty years. In the age-long duel between France and the House of Austria, this is the end of the first act; the principle of absolute authority, the reign of Rome, the domination of the Inquisition, restrained and controlled in France

and England alike, seemed henceforth relegated to the Central Empire. In France, England, Holland, in Scandinavia, and in the Lutheran States of Germany, freedom should reign. Henri Quatre had the vision of a confederation of fortunate States united in amity; balancing Spain, Austria, and the Empire, those great reservoirs of absolutism, by the prosperity of their trading democracy. He imagined the United States of Europe.

And this, perhaps, was his most striking originality. Nations in those days were goods and chattels; they were given with a daughter's dowry, bequeathed to a son with his inheritance. It seemed quite just and fair that France should ask for Navarre and Milan, England make good her rights to Aquitaine, Spain rule in Belgium, Austria in Burgundy. Henry first saw the life of peoples with an unprejudiced eye; this child of Nature discerned the full iniquity of the claims of kings. His new project was to respect nationalities. He said:

"Let the Spanish-speaking countries belong to the Spaniards; the Germans to the Germans; but I want all the French!"

And he cast a longing eye over Lorraine, Savoy, Franche-Comté—which ought to have been his, evidently . . . .

No hegemony, whether of Austria or of another! No universal tyrant, but a society of nations: such was the dream of Henri Quatre. And had he lived the thing might have come to pass; so great was the force of attraction that radiated from a King whose good sense was almost genius, whose cordial kindness was little less than charity. He hoped to force the Austrian to evacuate the Netherlands, forming in his stead a

Republic of the Low Countries. He planned another Commonwealth in Switzerland, a third in Venice; Genoa and Tuscany should fuse in a fourth. These four democracies should be balanced by five hereditary kingdoms: France, England, Spain, Sweden, and Lombardy. And there should be six elective sovereignties: the Empire, the Papacy, Denmark, and the frontier States of Hungary, Poland, Bohemia—Europe's bulwark against the Turk.

Meanwhile, in a few years he restored the finances of France and her well-being. The roads were rebuilt and planted with trees (even now the fine old centenary elms are called "*des Sully*" in memory of Henry's minister). He established mills and works and furnaces, for the manufacture of glass, carpets, cloth, and especially silk. If the silk trade of France brings in to-day some four hundred millions of francs in the year, it is a legacy of the brave, gay, practical monarch, so besotted with the welfare of his people that he planted even his gardens of the Tuileries with mulberry-trees for the silkworms, and gave up a part of his palace of the Louvre as a permanent Exhibition, or Palace of Industry, in which to show the latest inventions and machines, with lodgings for such artisans as should come from the provinces to show their models.

He built the Place Royale (to-day, the Place des Vosges), whose porticoes were originally destined to exhibit a permanent show of silken manufactured goods. He built the tapestry mills of the Gobelins. He built the Pont-Neuf, where his statue still stands, and all the streets of the Marais, and the Place Dauphine, and how much else of the Paris we admire!

And he was scheming and building the foreign

prosperity and peace of France when the dagger of a mad fanatic, one Ravaillac, crazed by the sermons of embittered priests, cut short the King's career. Total eclipse of all the schemes and projects of that brilliant reign! The heir to the throne (Louis XIII) was eight years old; the Queen-Regent another Medici, and without the brains of Catherine; her minister a priest him whom we know as Cardinal de Richelieu.

France turned her coat, left the paths of pleasantness and peace, left off farming and spinning, began fighting again, and indeed to some extent renewed her civil wars. France was no longer democratic nor Liberal. Yet, so imperious are the needs of a political situation (which indeed is often the result of a geographical situation) that her aim, no less in the seventeenth than in the sixteenth century, will be the abasement of the House of Hapsburg, the limiting and lopping of the Empire, and above all the struggle with Spain. Richelieu and Louis Quatorze, Absolutists and Ultra-Catholics, will pursue this task no less perseveringly and no less arduously than Henri Quatre; if not by the same paths, they tend to the same goal. And that goal they attain! France will be covered with ruins (having paid in war loans and taxes and indemnities, over and over again, more than she possessed). But France, ragged, mutilated, will at any rate rise from the struggle triumphant: her foe breathes no more! Considered as a political entity, Spain thenceforth is dead and France the leader of the world.

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MADAME DUCLAUX: *La Reine de Navarre.*

CHAPTER III

THE CENTURY OF LOUIS XIV

The murder of Henry IV appeared at first to secure the triumph of Austria and of Spain. His widow, the Queen-Regent, as an Italian, was naturally subject to the influence of the Italians, so plentiful at court: her foster-sister, Eleonora Galigai, Concino Concini (Maréchal d'Ancre), and Gonzaga (Duc de Nevers).

Although she at first protested her resolve to carry on her husband's policy, her sympathies ran in an opposite direction. The Florentine banker's daughter was not bold enough to daunt the German Emperor and the Hapsburg King, and the pious Catholic was timidly anxious as to the spiritual welfare of a sovereign whose allies were Lutherans and heretics.

Therefore, despite her fair words to Sully, Marie dei Medici soon veered her ship; in 1611 Sully was sent from the helm. The Queen broached anew an old project, which her husband had rejected, of marrying her son, Louis XIII (nine years old), to a Hapsburg princess and giving her daughter to the heir of Spain. At the same time she promised no longer to harass the House of Austria, "*de ne plus troubler les princes Autrichiens dans les affaires d'Allemagne.*"

Meanwhile, in France the great feudal lords broke out in revolt against the feeble sovereign, who soon

made peace, or rather bought it, paying out by the million those gold coins which the economical Henry had stored in the Bastille. The States-General were summoned to debate and decide the affairs of the kingdom. This was in May, 1614, the last month of liberty; they will not meet again until 1789.

The most memorable result of their convocation was the bringing into note of a promising young prelate who will make for himself a name outside the Church. This was Armand Duplessis de Richelieu, Bishop of Luçon. The assassination of Concini soon left him sole in power.

At first blush, Richelieu appeared eminently a man of the Queen's party: the future Cardinal was not only a prelate, but a believer; he was a partisan of Concini; he appeared the champion of the Church. And no doubt he lent himself rather freely to this interpretation, partly because his private and personal convictions were not unlike those of the zealots, and also because he was anxious to secure the support of the majority. But his sole aim was the grandeur of his country, by whatever means that best might be attained. And he was soon convinced that the advantage of France lay, abroad, in the humiliation of the Catholic Powers and, at home, in reducing the Protestants to the common measure of the kingdom. They possessed in the West, at La Rochelle, a sort of metropolis which served as centre to what was virtually a Huguenot Republic—a State within the State (much as a Protestant Ulster might be, safeguarded from the Home-Rule of a Catholic Ireland)—an idea nowise distasteful to our modern minds, nor, indeed, to the federative principles inherent in the West and South of France; but abominable in the sight of that down-right absolutist and unitarian, Richelieu.

So he laid siege to the Protestant capital and demolished La Rochelle: the Huguenots had to surrender their free towns, though they were permitted to enjoy their religion. And then, having scotched the Protestant at home, Richelieu steered his ship towards the Protestant abroad: renewed the *entente* with the Lutheran princes of Germany, with the Scandinavian courts, and bestowed in marriage—not on the Spanish Infant, but on the Prince of Wales—the King's sister, that young daughter of Henri Quatre and Marie dei Medici, Henriette-Marie, whom we English know as Henrietta Maria, mournfully predestined to return one day to France and seek at Saint-Germain an austere and tragic refuge, as the widow of King Charles I.

Thus having parried, as he thought, a possible danger from Protestant federalists at home or Catholic imperialists abroad—having squared both the Reform and the House of Austria—Richelieu turned his mind to the administration of the kingdom. The provinces were each in the charge of a royal Governor, a sort of Viceroy, with great local powers and prestige; these Governors, chosen from the feudal nobles, were a danger to the crown. Richelieu set some one to watch these guardians, to control these controllers: he established a system of Intendants—(shall we say Prefects, or Pro-Consuls?), generally, of bourgeois origin, who transmitted the King's orders, surveyed their execution, informed his ministers as to local interests, and generally secured both the obedience of the provincial authorities and the centralization of affairs.

Thus in all directions he prepared the glories of the succeeding reign—ay! even in letters, for Richelieu was himself a writer (thought himself, indeed, the

peer of Corneille) and founded the French Academy. The reign of Richelieu was the foreshadowing of the reign of Louis Quatorze. I say the reign of Richelieu, for the dull, grave, pious Louis XIII had, as a king, this one great merit that, recognizing in his minister a man of genius, he left affairs entirely in his hands. They reigned, then, together for eighteen years, and in 1643 they died, within a few weeks of each other, leaving France to a monarch—Louis XIV—four years old.

In 1626, Richelieu, then at the height of his power, told Louis XIII that, in a short while, he hoped to re-establish France in the prosperity and peace which she had enjoyed under his predecessor. Mills and works and shops should again enrich the towns, the fields should flourish, religion unite men and not divide them, the poor should no longer stagger under the burden of tax and war loan. So said the great man, meaning all he said. But no man, however great, can reach at the same time two goals placed in opposite directions. Richelieu had turned his back on the France of Henry IV; he was leading the way to the France of Louis Quatorze.

Farewell, then, that silk-weaving, farming, tolerant France—that Liberal and, in some degree, self-governing France—of which, between 1590 and 1610, we have enjoyed too brief a vision! It was a France akin to England and to Holland, happy, wealthy, free, but soon abandoned for an ideal of splendid unity and military glory and a theory of Catholic supremacy and centralized, absolute power. If we might at will turn back the course of History, would we? . . . The reign of Louis XIV was, in its way, one of the great magnificences of the world, the crown and glory of its

century—the Golden Age, the Classic Period, when France in its full effulgence radiates a grandeur and a glory that no State has known since the splendours of antiquity.

Sad, that the two ideals should apparently exclude each other! That we cannot walk in the paths of pleasantness and peace, plan that great concert of the United States of Europe, live sparely, dream greatly, and frame the common happiness of all (as was the aim of Henry IV), while at the same time floating our flags over conquered provinces, stamping our image on all time in an ineffaceable impression of grandeur and authority, elaborating an élite of warriors, poets, sages, and orators, whose glory appears rather to reflect than to add to the supreme effulgence of the throne, while the Sun-King, himself, seems an emanation of the Divine radiance, a symbol of Deity, a visible sacrament, superior to all the laws and orders of our mortal sphere.

France, which had flung herself exhausted at the feet of Henry IV, glittered and flashed like a flaming sword in the grasp of his grandson. At first the King profited by the accumulations of his economical grandfather, and by the long and wise administration of Richelieu; the France of Richelieu, indeed, handed Louis his sword, just as France of the Revolution forged the sword of Napoleon. But Louis was a reckless spender. His peace no less costly than his wars. His balls and his palaces ran to as much as his battles. The King's great enterprises were a ruinous expense.

So many wars and so much glory, a camp full of heroes, a court full of poets, a Church full of orators, among the greatest the world has known; with on

all hands such marvellous fairy palaces: Fontainebleau, Vaux, Versailles, a score scarce less splendid; and the exquisite politeness and mastery of daily life which make the least vestige of those days: the private letters, the Memoirs, even the State Papers, immortal and precious as relics of an unrivalled culture —all this leaves the impression of a France superior to the daily round and common task of humanity. But look below the surface. On the surface is that exquisite, shining veneer; now, there may be much virtue in a veneer—musicians say that the tone and quality of a violin are entirely regulated by the nature of its varnish, and, as tone and quality, the age of Louis XIV was admirable—but underneath that brilliant polish the very substance of which the instrument was made appeared in danger. The wood had got the dry rot.

Under Henry IV, King and peasant were friends; the King entirely without splendour, a brisk, shabby, gifted little man, who had known what it was to go hungry for lack of a dinner; the farmer happy in his new-found prosperity, which he owed to the King. Their interests were the same. But what could bring together the Sun-King in his glory and the starved, brutish tillers of the soil, those sun-blackened human cattle whose portrait La Bruyère had drawn immortally? Not in Russia, not in Ireland, can we see aught so poor as the peasant's miserable mud-hovel; his clothes are rags; for, wretched as he is, fear and avarice make him seem more wretched still, lest my lord's land-agent, suspecting some secret hoard, should add to the rent and *redevances* that the farmer has to pay. He is ignorant as the ox in his plough, and the chances are ten to one that he knows scarce a word of that

fine French language they speak and write so well at court; very few words, and those in a country dialect, are sufficient for his needs.

These poor serfs, or rather subjects, supported the chief burden of the State; for the nobles and the clergy paid neither taxes, rates, loans, subsidies, nor subvention of any sort or kind. The King was constantly adding to the list of these fortunate exempt ones, so that the swarm of nobles was immense. And the burden of the State was very heavy on those who bore it unhelped. On account of the court. On account of the wars. The wars are splendid and successful. France frees the Low Countries from the yoke of Spain; adds town after town, province after province, to her own possessions; snatches from the Empire Lille, Metz, Toul, Verdun, Alsace, Franche-Comté, Flanders, Artois; becomes the uncontested leader of Europe. But all these wars take men, take money, and some one must pay the bill. Hodge (in France we call him Jacques) paid the bill.

It must not be supposed that the magic of glory, the enchantment of a great art, blinded all the eyes in France to the dangers of the over splendid and over centralized monarchy. There was throughout the reign a constant undercurrent of opposition, and at the very beginning of it, before the King acquired his full prestige, there had occurred a real revolution, a something very like our Long Parliament. It was called the Fronde. . . .

The weak point of a hereditary monarchy is the risk of a Regency. The history of France is full of stormy Regencies. If once or twice the Regent proved wiser than the monarch (as when Charles V ruled for his father, Jean-le-Bon, or Anne de Beaujeu for her

brother, Charles VIII), still as an axiom we may say that a Regency is the triumph of Misrule. France had experienced the truth of the saying in the Regencies for Charles VII; in the long domination of the Queen-Mother, Catherine dei Medici; and again during the minority of Louis XIII, when Marie dei Medici was Regent; but the stormiest of all, perhaps, was the minority of Louis Quatorze. During those same years which troubled the order of England and inaugurated our great Revolution, there was in France an echo of the same tumult; a light, laughing echo, as full of gaiety as of carnage, a medley of masquerades and massacres, of ladies and lances (such fine ladies, such free lances!), where the generals were the beautiful Madame de Longueville, Madame de Bouillon, and the Grande Mademoiselle. One of the actors in the drama (Retz) has left us the liveliest picture of it, and shows us the Hôtel de Ville in Paris, where two lovely Duchesses had their military headquarters: "A medley of blue scarves, and ladies, and cuirasses, and violins, a sound of drums and of trumpets, an atmosphere as of a romance of Chivalry." So writes Retz; but there was a method in the madness, and a logic underneath the laughter, as indeed there nearly always is in the great gay, tumultuous quarrels of France. The manner was different, but the matter of the conflict was the same on either side the Channel: it was the struggle of Parliament and prince; of a Constitutional Government and an absolute monarchy; of Jesuit on the one side, of Gallican, Jansenist, or Protestant on the other; the eternal conflict of authority with freedom. Voltaire is right enough when he says that these madcaps of Frenchmen, with their madrigals and their mistresses, pursued exactly

the same aim as their serious neighbours overseas, when they cut off the head of their King "*avec un acharnement mélancolique et une fureur raisonnée.*" Where Voltaire goes astray is when he supposes that the Fronde, like the English Parliament, attained its end. The Fronde was defeated absolutely. For it is as well to undertake seriously so serious a matter as the reform of a national constitution. The Fronde had to wait a hundred and forty years before (this time seriously enough) it resumed its heroic effort in 1789.

For the moment the autocracy of the King was absolute. One year after the defeat of the Fronde, the Parliament was required to enregister a certain necessary war loan. Now, nothing is more difficult than to believe that one is dead; the Parliament, its blood still tingling from the recent battle, ventured some poor show of criticism or remonstrance. They were in full debate when the young King strode into the House, dressed in his hunting clothes, his horse-whip in his hand:

"Gentlemen [said he], we all know what troubles have lately ensued on your debates; I have a plan to prevent any return of the annoyance. I order therefore that these debates shall stop! Monsieur le premier Président, I forbid you to suffer these assemblies, and you, gentlemen, I refuse you the right to attend them."

Thus was the Parliament dissolved. In England a similar act produced a revolution. In France it inaugurated the era of absolute obedience. Our Western civilizations, France and England, are by now so thoroughly imbued with democratic theories that we can barely admit (what would seem so evident to

a contemporary German) that Louis XIV honestly believed that he was furthering the social progress of his country by turning it aside from the goal of Democracy. He saw no tyranny in thus dissolving Parliament, no hardship in levying taxes at his will on an unrepresented people. He was the fount of law; his royalty was independent of the consent of the governed. His standard of values was other than ours, but just as logical and coherent. His aim was *Power*, not peace; and, since the nation best fitted to wield a sovereign power is that whose citizens submit to a central discipline accepted by all, he proposed to his subjects an ideal of *Order*, not freedom; of *Might*, not right; of *Faith*, not truth; he praised not justice but *Sacrifice; Authority*, not reason; and all this was set in a radiance of national honour and military glory; this was the Sun-King's object, which well may not be ours; yet is it one of the two greatest conceptions of a strong society.

Such as it was, no doubt, the military progress of France was ensured by his refusal to accept anything short of absolute centralization, monarchy, and unity. There is in the French character a vein of uncompromising logic; a determination to push a proposition to its conclusion, which makes French History invaluable to a student. During a long reign—or at least through more than fifty years of it—Louis XIV showed us in action the theory of Absolute Monarchy; and if he left his kingdom ruined and in rags, he left it not only grander and larger, but far greater than France had ever been before. The King of France was the leader of Europe; the King of England was his humble pensioner, and his grandson—his son's son—was one day to reign on the diminished throne of Spain. Al-

ready, in 1664, John de Witt, speaking to the States-General of Holland, found France alone in Europe really great: "The Empire [said he], is a skeleton, whose dry bones are strung together not with living nerves and sinews, but with links of wire; Spain is a broken reed"; and England under Charles II a servant and pensioner of Louis XIV.

On the morrow of the Fronde, the King had celebrated his accession to power by a medal, struck with the inscription "Order and Felicity." And the people had believed they were to see again the prosperous days of his grandfather, Henry IV. But he brought them no peace but a sword. War upon war inflated France with an atmosphere of glory and grandeur; the Peace of Westphalia left vanquished the Empire; the Peace of the Pyrenees humbled Spain; in 1670 the King occupied Lorraine; two years later he conquered Holland, took Franche-Comté, again attacked the Empire, and soon decided to wage two wars at once—against Spain, and against that old enemy of Spain, our England. War is the King's sport; he loves war for war's sake as well as for the praise and the profit that it brings. Henry IV thought of the country; Francis I thought of his knightly honour; Louis XIV thinks of history and the world's admiration. His eye is always on the gallery; the words Fame, Renown, Posterity, are never absent from his mind. His letters and Memoirs are eloquent in this respect:

"I envisaged with pleasure the idea of these two wars as a vast field of activity, whence at any moment might arise opportunities and great occasions for distinguishing myself and answering to the brilliant expectations which I had already excited in the public. . . .

"I ruminate in my mind the plans which I have conceived, plans not impossible: how fair they seem!"

"I determined as more advantageous to my plan of campaign, and less common from the point of view of the glory to be gained, to attack at the same moment four places on the Rhine, and to command in person the four besieging armies. I hope none can say that I have disappointed public expectation!"

And in fact in four days (between the 4th and 7th of June, 1672) the four besieged fortresses fell.

The pomp and splendour of these armies was worthy of a prince in a fairy tale. Every campaign ended in a sort of royal pageant: coaches of crystal and gold, horses draped in cloth of gold, courtiers and conquerors dazzling with diamonds, ladies all silks and plumes and laces; "Solomon and Darius were outdistanced," writes Coligny, in describing the campaign of Flanders.

And, to our mind, the small size of these armies is as remarkable as their magnificence. Probably Louis XIV never possessed more than 200,000 soldiers. In 1672 he invaded Holland with 172,000 men, divided in two armies: it was the first time in modern times that so great a concourse had ever been assembled; and all Europe felt its peace and its equilibrium threatened by such a preponderance of force in the hands of so ambitious a prince.

The cost of these campaigns was immense, and it is marvellous that France resisted during fifty years the continual drain of men and money. But Louis had been no less fortunate than his father and his grandfather in his choice of a minister. He drove the car of the State with a pair: Louvois, who organized his armies, and Colbert, who helped him to govern his

kingdom. Neither one nor the other was a Prince of the Church like Richelieu or Mazarin. Colbert was the son of a merchant of Reims, the very incarnation of the burgher spirit, regular, hardworking, economical, a hater of waste and profusion. The letters of Colbert to his King are an excellent commentary on the history of the reign.

In 1665 he begins his protestations:

"I have fancied that Your Majesty was beginning to prefer amusement and pleasure to any other thing."

Colbert was a marvellous administrator; in ten years he doubled the King's revenues. But his factories and model farms, his canals and his colonies, his fleet, his finance, could not bring money in as fast as Louis spent it! Colbert kept the King's accounts; he directed himself no less than six ministries—was Chancellor of the Exchequer, Minister of Agriculture, Director of the Board of Trade, Chief Lord of the Admiralty, Home Secretary, and Colonial Secretary; Colbert worked sixteen hours a day, and every day, in filling the treasury of France; but the King with his wars and his mistresses, his pleasures and palaces, spent four-and-twenty hours out of every day and night in emptying that golden hoard.

Already in 1670 the expenditure exceeded the receipts by three million livres; by 1680 the deficit almost reaches thirty-five million!

If but the King would limit his expenditure to suit his revenues! But Louis had never cut his coat according to his cloth: "*Sa Majesté n'a jamais consulté ses finances pour résoudre ses dépenses.*" Would he but consent to confine himself to a budget of sixty millions ("*trois fois autant qu' Henri Quatre ait jamais dépensé*") and the indefatigable minister promises

that the country shall support the strain. But Louis' thoughts are elsewhere. He is thinking of his projects ("*Qu'ils sont beaux!*"). He is dreaming of the praises of History which are, he says, "*exquises. . . .*" And Colbert begins to speak of the ruined provinces; of the difficulty of setting in the taxes; mutters something of a "universal bankruptcy," till, having, at four-and-sixty years of age, no longer the strength to support a tension never relaxed and a hopeless disappointment, he dies, so to speak, at his desk.

Thenceforth the affairs of France go steadily and rapidly downhill. Louvois, uncompensated by the frugal, the prudent Colbert, spent vast sums in reorganizing the military strength of France. The fiscal system was deplorable; and Colbert, with his sincere love of the working class, his interest in commerce and agriculture, was no longer there to correct by a wise supervision and protection the abuses that the system entailed. The poor were more and more oppressed.

In the preceding century, when France was more than half ruined by the wars of religion, Henry III, as a last desperate expedient for raising a considerable sum of ready money, had farmed out certain taxes, for a sum paid down, to certain financiers who were to collect them at their own risks and pocket the difference. This odious system was now efficiently organized. The crown, with its desperate deficit, sold its taxes dear; the landlords, at Versailles or the Army, were in nine cases out of ten absentees; the peasants of France were therefore at the mercy of the tax-collectors, who squeezed them hard and strong. These Farmers-General, or Crown Agents, were as a rule men of no birth, no gentle or noble tradition; a large

proportion of them had risen from the servant class, had been lackeys or butlers in noblemen's houses, then stewards, and so had obtained through their masters' influence some small receipt of taxes, from whose profits they purchased in time an agent's office from the crown; such were Gourville, Paul Poisson, Lange, Delisle, etc. The list is long of the multimillionaires who began life in the servants' hall and lived to marry their daughters into the old nobility. Not all were such. Many of the *Fermiers-Généraux* were enlightened patrons of the arts, and some were cordial, kindly souls, like that cousin of Madame de Sévigné's, M. d'Harouÿs, who was, says Saint-Simon, "*le meilleur homme du monde et le plus obligeant, et ne savait que prêter de l'argent*"; but these, as a rule, came to grief, and we know that Harouÿs died in prison. As a rule they were hard, clever, industrious financiers. Such men (says La Bruyère, who saw them in their splendour) "are neither kin nor kind, neither citizens nor Christians; they are hardly men: they are just rich people."

The literature and Memoirs of the times are full of references to the cruel hardness of the collectors of taxes: evictions, forced sales of household goods, fines, imprisonments, followed regularly in their wake. The reports of the Intendants (a sort of royal Prefects, instituted by Richelieu) are full of compassion for the victims of a system they were compelled to uphold: "This way of gathering in the taxes is too cruel!" writes the Intendant of Amiens in 1688. Of all these taxes the most hateful was the salt-tax, and, as it was comparatively easy to evade, dreadful punishments were meted out to the "*faux-sauniers*," that is to say to all such as used, procured, or sold any kind of

salt save that to be bought from the King's officers. Men were deprived of their liberty for having boiled their cabbage in a little sea-water to give it a savour. At Caen, in 1678, others were kept for years in prison, half-starved, on the mere unverified charge of "*faux-saunage*." In 1684 the Intendant of Soissons, visiting the prison at Guise, found there eleven wretches, men, women, and children (for five of them were under thirteen years of age), who for the last fifteen days had been crowded in a dark cell, not twelve feet square, which they were none of them allowed to quit on any pretext ("*ce qui est contre la pudeur et la décence comme contre l'humanité*"), seven of whom were charged with smuggling salt and four with evading the tobacco tax. At Vernes the salt-frauders were kept at the bottom of a dry well, quite dark (save for that one glittering star of the unattainable free daylight overhead), to which a ladder gave access, which was removed after the prisoner's descent. At Saumur, on one occasion, some salt-smugglers, kept too long in a dungeon under the moat, died on the staircase that led them to the light, suffocated by the first free blast of living air. The salt-tax was heavy—the tax being twelve times the value of the substance taxed—and obligatory, since persons were not left free to say they had no taste for the condiment; a minimum of purchase was imposed. Add to this royal mulcting of Nature's natural manna the many local taxes on wood, water, forage, and such like; consider the exactions of the nobles, who levied a tax of their own on the manorial mill and on the manorial oven, which alone were entitled to grind the farmer's corn and bake his loaf (for it was illegal to possess a mill or baking-oven of one's own); remember the obligation of stocking

one's cellar from the landlord's vineyards, and we see how the current flows which is bearing France to ruin and revolution.

Let those who would learn more on these matters read Vauban's *Dîme Royale*, the *Correspondance des Contrôleurs Généraux* in Depping's edition, or Beaulieu's *Les Gabelles sous Louis XIV.*

Meanwhile, at Versailles, the King in his splendour reigned in a palace such as the world had never seen, glittering with mirrors and gold, paved and lined with precious marbles, decorated with paintings representing the battles and the triumphs of the Great Monarch, and looking out over an immense park whose perspectives, whose alleys and bosquets were peopled with bronze and marble statues and reflected in vast sheets of artificial water, where lovely fountains played. The King lived there in a perpetual feast of music (he was personally an excellent musician), adulterous love, gaming, hunting, conversation, and religious worship. Versailles, which broke the heart of Colbert, for it helped that "general bankruptcy" he dreaded and cost a round seventy millions of francs, which we may assess at three hundred millions of our times—Versailles had this further ill effect, that it isolated the King from the nation as no King of France had hitherto been separated from his subjects. Versailles is a world away from that oak-tree of Vincennes beneath whose boughs Saint Louis used to sit and judge the quarrels of his people.

The last years of the *Roi-Soleil* were not happy: the sun set in a bank of ominous clouds. The King, who in his youth had shown a certain quality of sound good sense and natural moderation even in his excesses, was soured and hardened by the abuse of power. He

sacrificed all reality and nature to an artificial conception of unity and authority. He could not endure that any of his subjects should venture to differ from his view of things. In 1685 he revoked the Edict of Nantes, by which his grandfather had conceded liberty of conscience and certain humble and fragmentary freedoms to the Protestants of France. The France of Louis Quatorze must come into the King's pattern! After odious persecutions and more than mediæval cruelties, the bolder spirits, fleeing from forced conversion, death, or the galley-slave's hopeless oar, escaped when escape they might (for this resource was officially forbidden them), and yet slipped away innumerably into England, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Germany, and added in a few years one-third to the population of Berlin. Two hundred and fifty thousand members of the Reformed Religion are said to have quitted France in consequence of the Revocation.

Thus the King who had raised his country to such a pinnacle of glory and grandeur mulcted her not only in money but in men. Louis lived to taste the bitterness of defeat: more than once France was invaded, vanquished. Paris was threatened. And though, when things seemed darkest, a great French victory flung its weight into the scales and set things straight again, so that the ensuing Peace of Utrecht, in 1713, left France still the first Power in Europe, with a French prince on the throne of Spain, still the victorious country was exhausted, impoverished, and generally hated by her neighbouring States.

The future loomed dark. Already in 1709 the King at Versailles had listened to the angry cries and threats of the famished citizens of Paris. Already France had left behind her the great, proud, pompous,

glorious, august century of Louis XIV. Already people began to murmur of justice and freedom. There was the first raw breath of Revolution in the air.

The experiment of Absolute Monarchy had been tried, and had failed.

We have raced through this admirable seventeenth century and seen but little of all that made it great, as we may, on a hurried journey, cross the Alps by night, or pass the Italian lakes invisible and wrapt in mist, having no time to delay even to see the world's wonders. Science—that change in the point of view which suddenly transformed the small, neat, anthropocentric universe of the Middle Ages into the Infinite Cosmos, the silence of whose endless spaces terrified Pascal; Science, with its discipline of doubt, and the consequent reaction of passionate natures more than ever insistent on the need of Sacrament and Cross: Descartes and Pascal, Bossuet and Fénelon, and the Saints—Francis of Sales and the greater Vincent de Paul; and the poets, the greatest France has known between the *Chanson de Roland* and Victor Hugo: Corneille, the prophet of honour, courage, and man's indomitable will; Racine, the tender, cruel interpreter of a broken heart in all its subtlety and feigned restraint; Molière, with his inextinguishable laugh, his appeal to Nature and reason; La Fontaine, with his exquisite simplicity, another child of Nature, and (like Molière) in his last reaction, under all the fun and the frolic, infinitely sad—we must leave these great genuises and others, though they illustrate and explain the century of Louis XIV—and are indeed as much an integral fibre of modern France as Shakespeare and Milton are of modern England—yet we must leave them behind us for sheer lack of time and space.

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CHAPTER IV

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

WHEN we leave the seventeenth century for the eighteenth, we seem to quit a noble hall admirably proportioned, majestically grand, but not exactly suited to any purpose of modern life, and to find ourselves in a maze of small and pretty rooms, often disgracefully dirty, but charmingly decorated, commodious, and well-lighted. The grand old Christian ideas of the preceding age: Eternity, the supreme importance of the human soul, faith, loyalty, the sacrifice due to king and country, the beauty of Unity, seem suddenly to have dropped sheer out of existence; as though, like notes too much thumped on a piano, the last generation had hammered them mute. It is but a few years since Bossuet preached, to the edification of all the court, how God had permitted the English Revolution, Civil War, and the death on the scaffold of King Charles I, in order that Henriette of England might die, in exile, a Roman Catholic. To even the dawning eighteenth century this point of view appeared as remote as the Middle Ages. Bayle, in the great *Dictionary of History* which heralded the modern period, already makes his mock of those who say that great calamities are Heaven's means of purifying the souls of princes: "The public" (says he) "*se passerait bien de tels bains!*" For the point of view has changed.

Science and Nature become the passion of the hour; and, when once we get down to the bedrock of Nature, there is no such immense difference between man and man. We consider them in their generation and their death, and we wonder why one should be the Sun-King and the other a starving serf. A new tenderness for the poor, a sense of human equality, a desire to dispose the State in accordance with Reason and Justice, instead of continuing the reign of tradition and privilege, such were the signs of the times that, from the very first years of the new century, began to startle minds accustomed to the absolute rule of King and Church. Between 1707 and 1712 an Archbishop (Fénelon), a Marshal of France (Vauban), and a magistrate (Boisguilbert) made known their separate schemes for sweeping reforms which, had they been adopted, might have saved France the expense of a great revolution. But Louis XIV was deaf to the voice of the charmers. He disgraced the Marshal (who, being tender-hearted, as old soldiers often are, forthwith died), he kept the Archbishop in exile and banished the magistrate. But he could not banish their ideas.

Louis XIV survived by fifteen years the century that bore his name. In 1715 he died, and left the throne from which he had reigned for two-and-seventy years to a child of five years old, thenceforth Louis XV. The situation was tragic, for France was bankrupt, with an annual deficit of sixty-five million francs, and no man in the kingdom had so deplorable a reputation as the Prince-Regent. This was Philippe d'Orléans, the late King's nephew, a curious, witty, intelligent, irresolute creature, a chemist, a would-be reformer, and a debauchee. There was scarce a crime of which

men did not publicly accuse him. Because he was the doting, foolish father of a bad young woman, they whispered of incest and said aloud he had no prejudices. Because (mysteriously enough, it is true) the Dauphin, the Dauphine, and one of their sons had all died suddenly in the space of a few weeks, they murmured: "Who was the next heir? the Regent, of course!" For the great poison-trials of 1676 and 1680 were still fresh in the public mind.

Even Fénelon, the wise and the just, even Fénelon, who loved the Duke of Orleans, lent an ear to these terrible suspicions. And Louis XIV, though his robust good sense qualified his nephew a braggart of imaginary crimes, "*un fanfaron de crimes*," secretly modified the provisions of the Act of Regency so as to protect the person of the babe who was his heir.

We, who know the Regent by the masterly, full-length portrait of him which fills many volumes of the *Memoirs* of the Duke of Saint-Simon, and by the more intimate, familiar jottings of his mother's *Correspondence*, we may feel sure enough that this gifted and good-natured libertine, impressionable and sometimes base, was yet not quite Macbeth. No Richard of Gloucester, either; no Wicked Uncle scheming to assassinate the Babes in the Wood. We have witnessed that burst of tears, that uncontrollable sob, with which, to Saint-Simon's surprise, he greeted the news of the first Dauphin's death, though it removed from his path a hostile kinsman. Many of the great memorialist's immortal pages are still moist with Philippe d'Orléans' "droppings of warm tears." We therefore know him for what he was; a Man of Feeling, the first of a type frequent enough throughout the eighteenth century, a man of impressions and curiosi-

ties, utterly unprincipled, sometimes perverse, yet full of the milk of human kindness, disinterested, amiable. . . . Diderot, Rousseau, have traits in common with him. But then the type was new; and those who judged the Regent by the standard of the intolerant, noble, cruel seventeenth century supposed him a man ambitious of power, and, knowing him for an atheist, thought it natural that he should be a monster and a murderer.

The Regent's first act was to pronounce himself the champion of reform, to restore to the Parliament its long-confiscated powers, affirming, in a phrase borrowed from *Télémaque*, that, though his hands were bound to keep them from doing evil (an allusion to the late King's secret codicil), yet he would leave them free to accomplish good. Now, for the successor of Louis Quatorze, when opening Parliament, to quote Fénelon —and especially *Télémaque*—is as though the Tsar had suddenly spouted the most reprehended pages of Tolstoi to the Duma. Such a quotation is a programme in itself.

But when it came to the point of actual reform—to the question of deciding how to pay off the national debt and restore the finances of the kingdom—that programme became vague. One party (headed by the Duke of Saint-Simon) proposed to repudiate the debts of the crown and start with a clean slate. But what sort of a reform is that which commences with a national bankruptcy? The Regent's curious, investigating mind, always open to a new idea, preferred to accept the suggestions of a Scottish financier, one John Law of Lauriston.

John Law was an inventor in finance. As is the way of inventors, he failed, and left an unenviable

reputation, while later experiments took up his ideas, gave them a twist here and a turn there, and so renewed the world. For John Law invented the system of credit. The standard of value was gold. John Law recommended the concentration of the moneyed wealth of a nation in a central bank (no private person being allowed to keep in his house more than twenty pounds in gold), and the conduct of affairs by a system of letters of credit. For what is a bank-note but a letter of credit signed by a name universally known and respected, the name of the State? Each State according to his system, ought to possess a central bank, which should be, at the same time, an inland revenue office, receiving dues and taxes, and thus dispensing with the onerous services of the tax-farmers. No doubt but in his system he was inspired (as Voltaire declares) by his remembrance of the Bank of England and the English East India Company; but he pushed his theory to an extreme.

The central bank, continually renewed and replenished by the revenues of the nation, was to obtain the privilege of issuing a proportion of paper notes, guaranteed by the State, accepted by the public for their nominal value, but representing in reality only one-fourth of their worth in gold. Law actually founded his bank with a capital of six millions divided into twelve hundred shares, payable for three-fourths in State-guaranteed bank-notes. The success was prodigious; by the exercise of credit and the issue of paper money, the difficulties of the financial situation appeared dissipated; the State, continually in receipt of taxes, was a security not to be despised, and commerce revived.

The Regent, ever in love with new and bold ideas,

was enchanted. In 1618, two years after its foundation, he dubbed Law's bank the Royal Bank of France; the farmers-general were dismissed and, in many cases, compelled to disgorge; Law was appointed the supreme Comptroller of Finance; he was made Master of the Mint; already, in 1718, he had been conceded the monopoly of French trade with India, with Senegal, and also with the Mississippi; the shares in his West India Company were the fever and the passion of the hour. The public, tired of poverty and economy, speculated wildly; shares in Law's bank worth five hundred livres (or francs) at their emission rose to the extraordinary price of twenty thousand francs. It is a question whether Law's system might not have answered had the public jobbed and speculated with a less fantastic fury; despite its ultimate disaster, it undoubtedly stimulated trade, industry, and the circulation of wealth.

We must remember, before we judge the schemes of Law (and that English echo of them, the South Sea Bubble), that, in 1720, nations had still before their eyes the example of a Power which had, in actual fact grown fabulously rich by speculating in American trade. Spain, so mighty in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was at last too weak to maintain her clutch on the gold and the spices of the New World. Law's Company might have been successful had he, instead of speculating, perfected the means of transport. The cotton, the sugar, the quinine, the tobacco, the chocolate, the coffee, and the indigo of the West India Company would have found purchasers in France had they come to hand.

It was unfortunate that the Royal Bank was solidary with the Company. A sudden mysterious panic

precipitated the crisis. When it was known that the bank would pay no more than ten pounds on any single account (an example followed by all the banks of France in the autumn of 1914 with no ill results), the public lost its head. On the 17th of July, 1720, sixteen persons were killed in the crush before the gates of the establishment in the rue Vivienne. The Parliament refused to renew the privileges of the West India Company, and these envied treasured shares sank to the level of waste-paper. Law fled for his life to Venice. The Regent alone could not stem the tide of events (though he never quite lost his faith in the clever Scotchman and his last project was the recall of Law); in the general consternation that followed the crash, the new measures stood condemned; the farmers-general were recalled, and the finances of France resumed their accustomed, more leisurely pace on the road to ruin.

The dearest illusion of the Regent was that, in his person, his illustrious great-grandfather, Henry IV, lived again. He had cast himself for the part and intended, by much the same means, to restore France to prosperity. The reform of finance was the first step (and here, as we have seen, he tripped), the second was to change the direction of the kingdom's foreign policy. For the last hundred years the tides of France had set towards Spain, towards Austria, and her policy had been Catholic and (if I may use a modern term) Conservative; as Louis XIV had said, when his grandson ascended the throne of Spain, "The Pyrenees are abolished!"—"*Il n'y a plus de Pyrénées.*" That was in 1700. A score of years later, the Regent was inclined to re-establish that range of mountains and, instead, to abolish the Channel. He exiled the

Stuart Pretender, drew closer to the Hanoverian King of England, concluded a triple Alliance between France, England, and Holland, and in all things attempted to institute a liberal policy.

But Philippe d'Orléans had none of the grit, the pluck, the tenacity of the little Béarnais. His good nature, his facile vices, his wit, his liberal ideas, may have been a legacy from the great ancestor. What he lacked was the endurance and constancy that sees a thing through. As his own mother said: six fairies were invited to his christening and endowed him with all manner of gifts and graces, but a seventh fairy (whom thay had forgotten to invite) added this proviso: that none of them should be of any use to him —or, we may add, to any one else. He had not, in short, that spice of grim earnestness without which the ship's captain seldom weathers a storm.

And the liberal policy failed, just as the financial reforms had failed. And in fact England was the worst enemy of France throughout the eighteenth century, sweeping her colonies, one after the other into the Tom Tiddler's ground of perfidious Albion: taking Madras, burning Pondicherry, seizing all that Indian Empire which Law had planned, which Dupleix and Le Bourdonnais had conquered; snatching Senegal by surprise; next, leading her armies to the New World, annexing Canada: Quebec, Montreal, Acadia. The Mississippi was no longer French; New Orleans alone remained the isolated relic of a ruined dream. Scant wonder if, at the end of the century, the French fought with gusto to help the Americans shake off the yoke of the English pirate.

I can only see one good thing that fell out—and that in the most casual, inconsequent way—in con-

sequence of the Regent's change of policy. When France broke with Spain, the Government sent back (as a piece of returned goods) the little Spanish princess, already imported and being "saved up" for Louis XV, and married the young monarch instead to the daughter of Stanislas, King of Poland. Kings of Poland are seldom lucky; this one as usual lost his crown. And his young son-in-law of France felt himself in honour bound to wage war upon the German Emperor in order that the crown might be restored. The two monarchs came to an arrangement—happier at least for France: King Stanislas did not recover his Polish throne, but he was made, for life, the Duke of Lorraine, on the understanding that at his demise the duchy should be added to the realm of France. Stanislas had a romantic and beautiful adoration for his one child, his daughter, the French Queen, and he spent the rest of his days in rebuilding the city of Nancy, making it the most graceful, if not the most beautiful city in Europe, so that his dying bequest might at last be worthy of her—and of him.

This duchy of Lorraine was indeed a great acquisition, protecting France on her weak, exposed north-eastern frontier, and bringing a rich mineral region and a keen, valorous population into the national fold. But it is the only piece of political good fortune which happens in all that long reign of Louis Quinze (the Regent had been carried off by a stroke of well-earned apoplexy in 1723), which is the least interesting, the least noble, the least fruitful (I mean from the political point of view) in all the history of France. There was an almost total absence of organized political life.

At the close of the reign, France was no longer the

first kingdom in the world: England ruled the seas; and, in Europe, two new States, Prussia and Russia by their rapid rise, ambition, and importance, threatened the balance of power.

France was a charming, inconsiderable State, mighty only in the realm of intellect and art, but there admittedly supreme, and looked upon by other nations as a sort of Earthly Paradise, where life (at least in polite circles) was happier than elsewhere.

"The scheme of things will last as long as I," said Louis XV, "and after me the floods will sweep it away. *Après moi, le déluge.*"

The age of Louis Quinze was not an age of glory. Contrasted with the reign of Louis Quatorze, we see the ugliness of its absurd contrasts and the monotony of its dull frivolity. And yet it was, undeniably, an age of progress. Not in territory and not in wealth; it, too, contributed to the growth of France by the general diffusion of knowledge and the gradual constitution of a public mind. The form of national life was changed. King and court were nowhere; Versailles of no account. And the real King of France (in exile) was perhaps Voltaire. At any rate, Paris had seized and kept the whilom supremacy of Versailles. And in the capital the Orleans princes kept up an increasing rivalry with the crown. In the eyes of the Parisians (who never forgot how the Regent had transferred to their city the seat of power), they —and they only—were the real descendants of Henri Quatre. Versailles appeared to them at once odious and old-fashioned. While France remained attached to the monarchy, as a principle, the dissolute, ignorant King, in his person seemed the degenerate monster of an antediluvian period to those circles which,

grouped round the Duke of Orleans and the great financiers, were occupied in elaborating the conceptions of the future.

By 1750 Paris is again the centre of France, and the intellectual fashions and passions of the hour emanate from a few *salons* round the Seine. A sort of League for the Common Weal binds together the farmers-general and the great bankers, who possess the material wealth of the nation, and the men of letters and philosophers, who are forming its mind. Round the supper-tables of the rich financiers the thinkers of France are already preparing a revolution.

What is our Constitution? asks Voltaire, in his *Siècle de Louis Quinze*. A tissue of contradictions. Wherever we cast our eyes we meet incoherence, harsh cruelty, incertitude, and arbitrary caprice. The feudal anarchy exists no more, and yet its laws and usages subsist, so that French legislation is in a state of intolerable confusion. There are as many sorts of jurisprudence as there are towns in France! The man who has gained his suit in Brittany may lose it in Languedoc. If there be some semblance of a clue in the maze where the provinces are subject to Roman Law, let us not forget that there are forty thousand Roman laws, without counting the commentaries. But what shall I say (he proceeds) of those unfortunate provinces which are subject, not to law, but to local custom? There are five hundred and forty different customs in France, if we count all the provinces, towns, and even villages which are exempt from the principal jurisdiction of the kingdom. A man who should travel through France in a post and chaise changes the law he is governed by more often than he changes horses! Customs of a barbarous an-

tiquity maintain the force of law, and the ignorant Parisian who shall hire and inhabit for a year and a day a house in Franche-Comté, finds himself, to his consternation, a slave, a serf, *mainmortable*—incapable of bequeathing his own fortune to his own kith and kin!

I ask pardon for so long a quotation; but how could I show more plainly in so short a space the confusion of French law, the dissatisfaction of the public with its hopeless chaos, and that universal cry for Unity, for Order and Liberty, which, little by little, will bring about a revolution? "In this age [says Voltaire] we are lovers of perfection; let us try to perfect the laws under which we live."

In such a questioning, sceptical, libertine age, one might have supposed that the nation, continually oppressed by the weight of its ill-administered finance, would have called to account the authorities responsible. But such was the prestige of the monarchy in France that for thirty years the Fronde of the intellectual party (the Intelligentsia, as they would say in Russia) remained, so far as practical politics were concerned, purely theoretic. Montesquieu, in search of liberty, remains almost a conservative. Voltaire was in no wise a democrat, but a constitutional monarchist of a conservative type; it was religious liberty, it was Free Thought, for which he was ever ready to break a lance; it was in the realm of ideas that he was a revolutionist. In his youth he had been exiled to England, and he returned bringing with him something of the spirit of Newton, Locke, and Shakespeare, exalting, recommending, and occasionally translating the works of these great men, throwing broadcast that fertilizing seed of English poetry, English thought,

English experimental science, English constitutional ideas, which filled with so vast a harvest the second half of the eighteenth century in France. Voltaire was a renewal rather than a revolution. He spent, in fine, some sixty years in saying, in exquisite terms:

"Be clean; take your tub; open free baths for the people.

"Be kind; don't burn witches; don't hang Protestants; and if a girl have an illegitimate baby, or a soldier desert in time of peace, judge them as ye would be judged.

"Keep well; don't have the smallpox. Believe me, if you are inoculated, it is quite unnecessary."

Such were the commandments of M. de Voltaire. The society he dreamed of would have been a perfectly well-regulated and disagreeable despotism, much, as M. Faguet has observed, like the First French Empire with all the glory left out—a world in which the sole important things would be good health, success, and power, excellent things in their way. . . .

Louis Quatorze would never have believed that, for thirty years, you could openly and publicly call in question the existence of God while continuing to respect the government of the King. Yet it is only toward 1750 that the constitution of the monarchy is seriously and definitely criticized:

"Fifty years ago [writes the Marquis d'Argenson in his *Memoirs*] the public took no interest in polities. To-day, even in the provinces, every one reads the *Gazette de Paris*, everyone has an opinion."

And again (in 1759) he says:

"A philosophic wind of free, anti-monarchical government has stirred us all; and it is possible that this government may take form in our minds and come

into actual being on the first opportunity. Perhaps the revolution may take place with less opposition than men have supposed—nay, on the contrary, be greeted with applause."

Meanwhile Voltaire records:

"Towards 1750 the nation, tired of literature, of the Opera, of Jansenism, began to take an interest in the Corn Laws. . . ."

About the same time, in 1755, appeared the first pamphlet to fall from Rousseau's pen: the *Discourse on Inequality among Men.* This last is indeed a date! If the seventeenth century has been named the century of Louis the Fourteenth, we might well call the eighteenth century the Age of Voltaire and Rousseau: Voltaire, the Apostle of Reason; Rousseau, the Prophet of Nature. Voltaire had the advantage of knowledge and length of days; but the little man from Geneva was the Master of the age. Instead of attempting Voltaire's mild reforms, he sought to reorganize society on a different system—in fact, to shatter it to bits and "remould it nearer to the heart's desire." "All is good [said Rousseau] when it leaves the hands of God. Man is born virtuous. The social convention has corrupted him. We must therefore destroy society as it exists to-day; it is but a pact made between men for their convenience; since it is no longer convenient, let us renew the Social Contract."

Rousseau was a native of Geneva, the descendant of French Huguenots, who, in the sixteenth century, had been compelled to flee their country for conscience' sake. We might almost say that Rousseau's *Contrat Social* was their revenge! It is the result and the résumé of the political theories elaborated by the Protestant jurists of Geneva. More than once in

these pages I have drawn your attention to the deep Republican marrow of the Reformed religion; the Huguenots in exile wrought their theories to a finer point; and while French Catholicism, more and more Italianate with the process of centuries, arrived at an absolute conception of government (an autocratic monarchy, which regarded the people merely as a possession and attribute of the king), the jurists of Geneva declared equally absolute the sovereignty of the people.

The idea that the real fount of all authority springs from the people is a very old idea in France. "Kings reign by popular suffrage," so Milon de Dormans, Chancellor of France, had laid down the law in 1380. "*Nam, et si centies negent, reges regnant suffragio populorum.*"

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Duclos: *Mémoires secrets sur la Régence.*
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J. Michelet: *Histoire de France.*
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Emile Faguet: *Dixhuitième Siècle.*
Albert Malet: *Dixhuitième Siècle, Révolution, Empire.*

CHAPTER V

LOUIS XVI

FRANCE had despised and contemned its sad and dissolute old monarch, Louis XV (who once had been Louis-le-Bienaimé), but the country still remained attached to the idea of royalty, and Louis XVI was welcomed with enthusiasm. The people saw in their young prince a possible saviour. Even the Radicals did not disassociate the scheme of Revolution and the monarchical system: they hoped to seat on the throne another Henry IV or—still better—a constitutional king, like "Farmer George" across the Channel, for despite political rivalry, all that was English, from kings to turnips—and from a representative parliament to the new "swimming plough," maintained its full prestige in France.

Those immediately about the court conceived less lofty expectations. The young King had an excellent disposition, but very little mind, and the court exaggerated his slow dullness, which was not devoid of good sense—so much so that when, on his marriage to the lovely Princess of Austria, the poet Marmontel suggested a wedding-masque derived from the fairy tale of *Beauty and the Beast* (in French, *La Belle et la Bête*), the Minister of the Menus-Plaisirs had hurriedly interrupted: "Oh, no! The public would think it an allegory!"

The court, perhaps; not the public. They knew that their young prince was brusque—sometimes even rough—in his manners; they knew also that he was moral, sincere, and kind; they said that he resembled that Duke of Burgundy, Fénelon's pupil, who had died young, threescore years agone, depriving France of a crowned reformer; they liked Louis no less that he was so little of a courtier; that he spent his days at a locksmith's bench when he was not hunting in the forest; that he liked talking to the common people, and was awkward and shy with the wits about the court; that he was indifferent to all the race of women, even, it was said, to his own exquisite bride (and that, for obvious reasons, was a pity), knowing no passion so strong as the desire to serve and to save his suffering people.

The truth lay somewhere between these two extremes. "The King is the honestest man in the world," said an Englishman who knew him, Arthur Young, "with but one wish, which is to do right," yet he too laments Louis' lack of foresight and "decisive parts," and that hesitating irresolution, born of too strong a conscience and too weak a mind, which made him ever the prey of the last opinion heard, unstable as water, constantly tacking and trimming a course which could not keep one constant goal in sight. Easy and lethargic, and sometimes so supine that he seemed merely stupid, one cannot imagine a character less congenial to the French; but Louis XVI resembled his German mother, the Princess of Saxony. Really well-meaning, amiable, full of human kindness, he had yet the most extraordinary sense of his own royal superiority; that "right divine" which his people had begun to question was transparently evident to

Louis XVI. Although sincere—indeed, ingenuous to the point of candour—he was not always truthful and this occasional dissimulation sprang from nothing mean; he considered himself so far above his subjects not by his personal worth but through his kingly office, and so responsible to Heaven for them, that he practised with them sometimes, for their own good, an economy of truth, as grown people must in their dealings with little children or with sick people. Intensely conscientious and utterly devoid of tact, constantly vacillating, sometimes he would suddenly crystallize into that terrible nervous obstinacy which the French call "*être buté*," and was then as impervious to argument or reason as any hysterical woman. With all this, kind to the core, human to an extent that made all who approached him love him, and yet exasperating to deal with, for no man could count upon the King (despite his love of right, his real moral worth), because of that weakness of mind in him, and that still more fatal weakness of will.

It is unfortunate that, after some years of complete indifference, the lethargic King awoke to the fact that he was married to the most lovely and the most charming princess in Europe: "the most beautiful woman I saw at Versailles," says Arthur Young, while Horace Walpole wrote in ecstasies of the liquid grace of her every movement, the poetry of motion. Her brilliant, soft complexion, her sweet, long blue eyes and the abundance of her thick, blond hair made her a dazzling apparition to all Northerners; while French observers, always great sticklers for regularity of feature, remarked the too long oval of her face, the prominent underlip that spoke of the Hapsburgs, yet admitted that she possessed in perfection "*la*

grâce, plus belle que la beauté." When at last the "Bête" discovered his "Belle," his subjection was complete, and the revenge of Marie-Antoinette for years of conjugal indifference was a complete ascendancy. The King and she were, in politics, on different sides of the hedge. Despite his exaggerated ideas of royal rights, Louis XVI was at heart a Liberal monarch; he firmly meant to guide his people into an area of comparative freedom and popular prosperity. The Queen had none of her mother's political ability (she was the daughter of the great Maria-Theresa), but a head full of the most violent aristocratic prejudices and disdains. Again and again Louis would swear fidelity to the new-planned Constitution; five minutes' conference with his adored Queen and he was planning to abet the intrigues of the Ultra-Royalists.

All this was not, of course, immediately apparent. For years, the Queen took no part in politics. She was a spoiled child who thought of nothing but her pleasure. Her German idea of *Gemüthlichkeit* and the fashionable theories of Rousseau made her abhor the restraint, the ceremony, the absence of all private retirement, which hedged in the life of a French Queen. She was expected to live, move, eat, dress, even bear her children, in public. Marie-Antoinette rebelled. She would have a life of her own; and in taking this innocent pleasure she managed to displease all parties alike. The old nobility, to whom the Queen was a sacred thing—almost like the crown or the flag—were horrified to watch her gadding with a young brother-in-law to the balls of the Opera or the risky little theatres of Paris, or even (as the old Marquis of Mirabeau complained) "flitting about the gardens and galleries of Versailles in a little frock and apron, fit

for a farmer's wife, with neither page nor lackey in attendance, and glad to accept the arm of any fellow in a frock-coat [*polisson en frac*, i. e., not in court dress] when she wishes to descend a flight of steps."

Meanwhile the people resented yet more bitterly the selfishness of the Queen's uncontrollable expenses. The country was ruined, the possibility of a national bankruptcy the theme of every serious conversation; but the Queen's high play, her passion for precious stones, her debts, her bets, her dressmaker's bills (she did not always wear the little cotton frock!), her daily conferences with Madame Bertin, the *modiste*, and the extravagant fashions that she launched; the vast sums, too, that she lavished on her bosom friends and favourites,—gained for her the reputation of a heartless frivolity. The people called her 'Madame Déficit" before they dubbed her "l'Autrichienne."

But that was ten times worse! The day was to dawn when Frenchmen would begin to suppose that their beautiful young Queen betrayed the country of her crown for the benefit of the country of her cradle. Louis XVI alone might have weathered the storm; his wife was a cargo, too precious to cast overboard, whose dead weight would sink the royal ship.

Perhaps the first faint rift between the Queen and the nation may be placed at the date of the Anglo-American War (1778–83), when the whole French public eager to avenge its wrongs on England and enraptured to find a country overseas inspired by its own new liberal ideas, flamed up in a sudden enthusiasm for American Independence. Liberty was the generous frenzy of the hour; Franklin, with his wise head under his Quaker's hat, the idol of Paris. But, while La Fayette led his Expeditionary Force across the

ocean to fight for the insurgents, the court hung back. Franklin had won from Louis XVI a treaty of alliance. Yet, now that the blows fell thick, now that the cause of Revolution prospered, the King and Queen of France began to feel that odd kinship, that intimate freemasonry, between sovereigns which is deeper than any national hate. The king listened impatiently to the popular praise of Franklin; he said nothing. But, to one lady of his court who sang those praises too constantly, he presented a portrait of the Transatlantic Reformer painted on the inside of I will not say what chamber utensil. The Queen, on the other hand, was loud in her regrets of the shabby trick that France was playing her English cousin, by assisting the rebellion of his insurgent subjects. She did not conceal her hostility, and, at the signing of that peace of 1783 which established the freedom of the United States she affected to treat the English as her dearest friends.

While all Paris was seething with the new ideas of Liberty, social and political equality, the Rights of Man; while the Peace of Versailles (which restored to France her colony of Senegal and four of her lost Indian cities) was filling the country with the still richer joy of hearing herself acclaimed the fairy-godmother of a liberated world, the Minister of War, Ségur (or rather, in point of fact, the court), in the very wantonness of brutal opposition, revoked an old edict of Louis Quinze, already in force for more than thirty years, which permitted men of less than noble birth to take rank as officers in the army.

According to this new edict, no officer might now attain the grade of captain unless he could prove four generations of noble forefathers or show himself at

least the son of a Chevalier of St. Louis; nor, should he enter the Church, could he hope to rise beyond some village vicarage. The French provinces were full of comfortable and cultured families, a little less than noble, a good deal more than humble, in which for the last thirty or forty years the eldest son had inherited the family manor, the next had risen to distinction in the Army, the third was doubtless *abbé* of some comfortable benefice, for the fourth his parents had bought some post in the magistrature, while the fifth made his way in the office of some Intendant or financier.

Imagine the consternation of the generation of young Frenchmen who attained their twentieth year about 1780! Men born in cultivated yet laborious homes; accustomed to a prolonged effort; capable of working, if needs be, twelve hours a day. By reason of their education and experience, these young *bourgeois* were generally in advance of the sprigs of nobility; at the examinations of the Artillery-School it soon became a proverb that "the competent were not noble and the noble were not competent." Let us imagine the chagrin, the rancour, of men of talent and character—men such as Laclos (I was going to say, such as Bonaparte, but he *was* noble)—men such as all Bonaparte's generals—men such as Barnave, Carnot, Danton, an energetic race, conscious of their own superiority, full of ambition, capacity, and energy, yet condemned in every career to take the lowest room and to contemplate (with Heaven knows what barely stifled rage) the young half-sharp of sixteen quarterings, who, because he has taken the trouble to be born, assumes himself a natural superior. And of course I do not mean (in that age of all ages, whose

nobility was so rarely gifted, so open-minded, so generous and so gracious) that the duke was, by reason of his birth, mentally inferior to the doctor. Not at all: a Liancourt, a La Rochefoucauld was equal to the best. But the time had gone by when the Government might assume in the noble a natural capacity, in the man of the middle class a natural incapacity, for any post or any art—even the art of war. "Nothing [wrote Rivarol], not the taxes nor the *lettres de cachet*, not the laws nor the abuse of authority, not the despotism of the provincial Intendants—nothing irritated the nation so sorely as the prejudice of noble precedence . . . *c'est le préjugé de la noblesse pour lequel elle a manifesté le plus de haine.*"

Anger against a Government which wasted the public fortunes of France, rancour against an aristocracy which barred all the avenues to fortune save those of finance, these were the sentiments with which the middle class greeted Ségur's edict. They asked a fair field and no favour, and equal taxation for the men of every class. The common people had their own grievances. The working class was organized in guilds or corporations, the number of whose members was fixed and might not be exceeded (even as to-day the Royal Academy in England, the Stock Exchange in France), and as the sons of the master-workmen generally succeeded to their fathers in the exercise of their craft, it was difficult for an apprentice, born with no silver spoon in his mouth, to rise from the ranks; it was even hard enough to enter those ranks as an apprentice, for the number of apprentices was also fixed and formal. The workmen asked free access to their craft and the abolition of the guilds.

But the farmers and peasants had most of all a

pressing need of reform. They were more and more conscious that their life was little better than a state of servitude. The King's taxes and the parson's tithe ate up the profit of their harvests. They were compelled to labour for their landlords so many days in the month or year without pay, to lend them on all occasions their carts and horses, to offer them as a present certain portions of their crops and stock, to bake their own bread at a fixed tariff in the landlord's oven, to buy their own wine at his press, with other vexations which once had been conveniences, or at least due return for service rendered. What angered the peasant with a slow, sullen, dangerous ire was that he was beginning to perceive that in exchange *no* service was rendered. His *corvée* and his *redevance* had been a part of his rent, and he paid the rent as well; the money and goods he expended had been in exchange for military protection, and the nobles no longer protected him, were incapable of protecting him, had no right to attempt it. For the system of government had changed, while his dues and debts alone remained unchanged. In fact, he was keeping up two distinct governments: a feudal system which had long ceased to exist, save in its abuses; and a centralized monarchy no less oppressive. For every hundred francs he gained, he had to squeeze out fifty-three for the necessities of King and country; another turn of the screw wrung fourteen for the landlord's dues; then the Church came, exacted another fourteen, and left the poor man crushed: with how much remaining for his rent, for his daily bread and the nurture of his family? Wonderful thrift of France, there was still sometimes a *sou* in his stocking! But the fear of the fisc made him hide it like a crime, exaggerate

even the appearance of his most real misery, lest the tax-gatherer should come and take also the one ewe lamb.

If the land was so exorbitantly taxed, there was an excellent reason to account for it; only the poor paid toll; those alone who had nothing to spare supported the immense expense of State, Army, Law, and Church. The thing appeared iniquitous to the conscience of the age, and the first reform the Tiers-Etat meant to exact was the abolition of the privileges of the nobles. When Arthur Young travelled in France, on the eve of the Revolution, he told the peasants, as it were a fairy-tale, that we, in England, have a great number of taxes, "but the poor do not pay them, they are laid on the rich; and, what is more, we have in England a tax paid by the rich for the relief of the poor." Sure, those poor people had never heard of such a Topsy-turvyland! Most of the miseries of their distressful country sprang from the opposite system: only the poor were required to pay, who could not pay; and the rich, who wanted for nothing, were in nothing mulcted of their affluence! Thus, since the reign of François Premier, every year the King of France had spent more money than he received, and had tried to annul the deficit by heaping a further burden on the poor peasant's back, that was already broken. By the accession of Louis Seize even a Minister of Finance could see that this process would yield nothing further. Louis had had some of the best ministers, and some of the worst, in French history. He had begun with a man of genius; his name was Turgot: "*Il n'y a que M. Turgot et moi qui aimons le peuple,*" said the King —"Only Turgot and I really care about the people." Turgot had attacked the sacrosanct system of the

nobles' privileges and had begun by abolishing the *corvée:* the forced labour of peasants; he was a Free-trader, and had attempted to reform the Corn Laws. But great was the ire of the lords and landed gentry. And the weak Louis, against his will, had abandoned his minister.

His successor, Necker (the father of Madame de Staël), a Swiss banker of English origin, had not the bold, wide views of Turgot, the reformer, the first Free-trader; but he was a wise financier, a cautious economist, a clear-headed, painstaking administrator. He had already found some sort of a clue in the chaos of French finance when some court cabal (the court had no relish for economy and disliked Necker for his *bourgeois* stiffness, for his foreign origin and his Protestantism) again turned the King against the servant who might have saved him. This time the finances of France were entrusted to a man of the world, M. de Calonne, who gave satisfaction to everybody with whom he came in contract. His talent appeared prodigious; the poor King owned that he had never been so tranquil; his long confabulations with Turgot, and especially with Necker, had sometimes fatigued him, but, such was the facility of M. de Calonne, that the maze of financial difficulties appeared illuminated; no trouble in the present; no anxiety in the future; "*son travail avec le roi n'était qu'un jeu*" (*Marmontel*). And the people at court were just as pleased as the King. Unlike that bear of a Necker; unlike the cold, proud, Turgot, M. de Calonne never refused to grant a favour or to do a kindness. No wonder if he were the most popular man, if not in France, at any rate at Versailles!

Unfortunately, when, after four years in place, M.

de Calonne looked carefully into his accounts, he found there a deficit of a hundred and fifteen millions of francs. This was the verge of bankruptcy. Arthur Young, who was travelling in France that year (1787), remarks how, in every serious conversation, that topic of a national bankruptcy would occur, with the further question (he puts it in italics):

Would a bankruptcy occasion a civil war and a total overthrow of the Government?

The King was obliged to recall Necker. But Necker was no magician, and though at the news of his return the French loan rose some thirty points, all he could do was to advise poor Louis to convoke the States-General: that is to say, to unite the members of the Three Orders of France: Nobility, Clergy, and Tiers-Etat, in order to ask them to furnish forth the funds which must redeem the debt.

The States-General had not met since 1614—since the majority of Louis XIII—and the King knew well that they would not meet simply to find a way out of his financial difficulties: they would insist upon reform—all sorts of reforms—they would exhume old abuses and make bad blood. The King himself was not so much opposed to a certain measure of enlightened reform; but his youngest brother, Artois (he who was afterwards Charles X), and especially the Queen would be violently, passionately against it. The King knew well that he would be asked to abolish the privilege of the nobles and the clergy. And partly from conviction and a sense of honour, but partly also from what I dare hardly call the dread of a row with his wife, the King did not mean to consent to any such abolishment.

The States-General met at Versailles on the 5th of

May, 1789; thanks to the influence of Necker, a double representation (as it was called) secured the Tiers-Etat, which stood for ninety-eighty per cent. of the nation, as many deputies as the two other Orders. From the very first hour, its superior ardour and energy were manifest. Those young men who had found no outlet for their powers in the Army, in diplomacy, in the Church, were there in crowds (there were eleven hundred deputies of the States-General, and half of them belonged to the Tiers-Etat).

There they were: members of the States-General or spectators and encouragers of its proceedings; they, with their wounded vanity, their relentless logic, their burning Utopian dreams. Nothing is so dangerous as the logician who is also a dreamer. He may be Laclos; he may be Robespierre; he may be Bonaparte; in any case he is sure to be an uncomfortable neighbour. Such silent and concentrated ambitions were not rare in 1789, when success was a privilege of birth or royal favour; when unprotected genius in a modest rank was frequently compelled to eat its heart out unremarked; when the issues were closed in front of a proud spirit; when humiliations were frequent and anger mute. At last the flood-gates were opened.

Like the barons of our King John, these young men asked of the King that which France had never possessed: a written charter, a Constitution. They demanded the suppression of privileges. They decided that the States-General should be called the National Assembly; that its members, all equal, should no longer be divided into Orders. They declared the equal Rights of Man, born free, admissible to all careers. They maintained that no sealed letter

of the King's could ravish from them this, their own inherent freedom, but only the judgment of the Law. They decreed the sovereignty of the People. They pronounced the abolition of privileges and the equality of all men before the tax-gatherer. The King should no longer demand a sum fixed at his own good pleasure; it was the deputies of the National Assembly who henceforth should decide what moneys they would vote; and over the expenditure of these moneys they would keep a right of control.

So far, so good. The King fretted and fumed. To one of the royal proposals the Duke of Orleans objected that it was illegal. "Legal enough, since I wish it!" cried Louis, voicing in his pettish discontent the very principle of autocracy: "*Si! c'est légal, parceque je le veux!*" He spoke of his divine right, his good pleasure, and his absolute power, and then sank into his plump and smiling apathy, ending invariably by granting what indeed he had no longer the power to refuse. The National Assembly was intoxicated with its own success. Admirable, so long as it was occupied in framing a permanent Constitution for the future, it lacked discipline, experience, tradition. Would it show itself equally adequate to the crucial difficulties of the present?

The Assembly was now the sovereign of France. The King, though king in name, had lost all executive power. Can we blame Louis XVI that he sought to evade this sad position of a *fainéant* king? He appealed to his troops to maintain his authority. In his horror of civil war, he imagined that the foreign mercenaries, Swiss and German, which the Government kept at its disposal, would be less inflamed and angry than the French; and doubtless also he thought

that they would be less easily converted by the enthusiasts for liberty. He summoned them all. And soon, round Paris on all sides—at Charenton, at Saint-Denis, at Courbevoie, at Sèvres, at La Muette, on the Champ de Mars,—a complete ring of troops, some twenty-five thousand strong, French and foreign, surrounded the capital. Paris lay in the midst of them like a beleaguered city. This move of the King's (or, as the people supposed, of the Queen's), and especially his appeal to the Germans, exasperated the Parisians. Bread was already cruelly short: did the King mean by a set blockade, by the argument of fire and famine, to refute the Rights of Man? False rumours flared up like wildfire—that the Queen and Artois had a plot to poison the King (*Young*), that the German dragoons were massacring the people in the Tuileries Gardens (*Marmontel*). And the knowledge that the capital was unprovided with either food or fire-arms added the keen tip of fear to the popular anger.

On the morning of the 12th of July Paris learned (and this time the news was true) that the King had dismissed Necker and all the Liberal ministry. A sombre wrath smouldered all day in the mind of the people that flared up at night, on the Boulevards, into a great, fierce blaze of indignation. Next day the mob attacked the Hôtel de Ville and the Invalides, demanding arms. If the King meant to fight, they, too, would show him what Paris could do in that line! Especially the public feeling incriminated the Queen; no doubt but Paris imagined itself in the snare of a second Catherine dei Medici. The lion roared its wrath of her feminine treachery. The people surged in the streets, sleepless, by day and night, shouting:

"Arms and bread!" By a miracle, the city which possessed no soldiers found in its every citizen a soldier equally able to obey or to command. The sack of the Arsenal and of the Invalides supplied a certain insufficient quantity of arms. And on the morning of the 14th of July (ever-memorable date, henceforth the national holiday) the people of Paris, dragging with them the cannons of the Esplanade, marched on the Bastille, the King's fortress, the bulwark of the monarchy, the immense frowning keep which for four hundred years had thrown the gloom and threat of its colossal shadow across the popular quarter of Saint-Antoine. The Bastille was part of the fortifications of Paris, but, above all, it was the State prison; it was to Paris what the Tower was to London. Its eight vast towers with the cannon on their platforms seemed to menace the seething faubourg at its feet: Down, dog, crouch! Be quiet!

The governor of the Bastille had neither garrison, munitions, nor food to withstand a siege; and doubtless he feared to bombard the unruly capital; he had no orders to destroy Paris. And so, like a young lion in sport, in the course of a summer's day, Paris tore the great mass to pieces. By the end of the afternoon, the King had no Bastille. To-day the tranquil waters of the Canal of Saint-Martin cover its ruins.

When the Duke of Liancourt broke the news to the King at Versailles: "*C'est une révolte*," said Louis.

"Nay, Sire," replied the Duke; "it is not a revolt; it is a Revolution."

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LAVISSE: *Histoire de France.*
MICHELET: *Histoire de la Revolution.*
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ALBERT MALET: *XVIIIe Siècle, Révolution, Empire.*

CHAPTER VI

THE FALL OF THE MONARCHY

And now begin ten years which loom so large in History, we scarcely can believe they merely were ten years. The Revolution, like a fiery plough, cut through France a fertilizing furrow, deep and unspeakably cruel, yet on the whole salutary. It buried out of sight all that hitherto had caught the eye and glittered, while it lifted out of the depths, in a supreme upheaval, fresh beds of virgin soil full of growth and unsuspected vigour of production.

In those ten years what an eddying dance of the whirligig of Time! The Revolution did not at once define its aim, which was the combination of liberty and unity: when a new idea comes into being it seldom springs full-fledged from the nest! The first conception of the men of '89 was a federation of provinces, each retaining its own essential life and character. They saw the State as a community of communities. It was the mediæval pre-Renaissance view; but all the modern democracies still were federal: Switzerland with her concert of cantons, the United Provinces of the Netherlands; and those United States of America which France had helped to liberate and which, naturally enough, appeared especially a model to copy. And there were others in the State who admired the

supple strength of the British Constitution and recommended it for imitation.

The French Republic was to be like none of these, but forged in tyranny and terror to such a degree of unity and patriotic energy as the world had not yet witnessed. Those men of '89 will, for the most part, die on the scaffold, accused of federalism as though it were a crime, the blackest form of treason—as perhaps indeed it was, at that moment.

The history of France is full of *coups d'état*—brusque transformations of the Government by means of an extraordinary stroke of policy. But the great Revolution did not spring like a bolt from the blue; the cloud had hung on the horizon, threatening, for more than fifty years. When it broke at last, it was with no sudden thunder-clap, but in heavy spots, falling one by one, and in approaching rumblings, leading up to the unimaginable and shattering crash of the tempest unchained. And threat followed threat with intervals so promising that even now we wonder whether a firmer conduct on the part of the Crown might not have averted, or at least diminished, the full catastrophe.

On the 5th of October, 1789, some eight thousand women of Paris marched on Versailles. They were angry at the continued shortage of bread, half-starved, and persuaded that the King meant to starve Paris into submission; convinced, too, that the Queen meditated some traitorous *coup d'état*. Louis had unwisely summoned the regiment of Royal-Flanders to Versailles: like so many of his actions, it was at once too much and not enough; a whole army might have inspired terror and respect for the Crown; one foreign regiment was a senseless provocation.

And the court had played the fool and made matters worse; the King's Bodyguard had given a banquet to Royal-Flanders, while Paris was without bread. The royal family had attended; the band had played "*O Richard! O mon roi, l'Univers t'abandonne,*" and the well-known air had excited a paroxysm of Royalist sentiment. Five or six soldiers of Royal-Flanders had torn from their caps the tricolour cockade and had stuck a white ribbon in its place. All this was known in Paris on the morrow, commented on and magnified.

So the women of Paris set out for Versailles at the head of a mob of insurgents. The Garde Nationale—that volunteer non-uniformed militia which had come into being on the 13th of July, by a process of spontaneous generation, in order to save the capital from some mysterious, wholly imaginary Saint Bartholomew which the Queen was supposed to meditate—the Garde Nationale, then, forced its general, La Fayette, to lead these valiant, hungry shrews on their wild mission. And this at last he did, in the hope of protecting the royal family from their rough caresses. . . . But who has not read, in the romantic pages of Carlyle or of Michelet, the wonderful tale of the women's raid on Versailles? No page in the history of France is better known than the story of their mad endeavour and its success.

And the King left Versailles at their bidding, stipulating only that he should take with him his wife, his sister, and his children, whom in truth he dared not leave behind, knowing himself to be, in spite of all, so much the most popular personage of them all. It was a wrench at his very heart-strings, a plunge in the abyss. Louis knew well that henceforth he would be, at least for a time, the prisoner of Paris. Would he

win the hearts of his unruly subjects, like Henri Quatre, and find his true glory in his arrogant capital? For the last hundred years no king had dared to dwell in Paris! Was this step a leap backwards to the popular rule of the little Béarnais? Versailles was the very symbol of absolute monarchy, the visible emanation of Louis XIV. For the King who quitted it sadly it was more than this: it was the scene of all his life. Hunting was his one passion, and here were his woods; metal-work his one pleasure, and here was his forge; here were all his friends; his habits, so dear to an indolent and lymphatic nature; in these high galleries he had first neglected, and then adored, his spirited, undisciplined Queen. For one long moment Louis hesitated. If he must quit Versailles, it was still possible to escape through Trianon to Rouen, or to make a dash for Metz, as the Queen advised and urged. But flight would mean civil war. . . . Who knows? Perhaps a crown for his Constitutional cousin, the Duke of Orleans!

So Louis went to Paris—let the shrieking, dishevelled Mænads carry him off. Through his carriage-window he saw the dancing madwomen, brandishing yellow poplar-boughs snatched from the autumnal trees: a wild cohort they looked, escorting the coach of the King! And, through this moving wood, a gleam of metal showed where the soldiers' pikes lifted in the air the loaves of bread conquered from some sacked bakery; but two of their pikes supported the murdered heads, still dripping, of the Royal Guards who had died to save their King. He saw that; he must have heard the ghastly threats howled at the Queen, sitting by his side: "Give me her entrails to make a fine cockade!" "No, I'll take her legs!" and so on,

in obscene jest and threat. Yet when, after nine hours of that terrible journey, they arrived in Paris, Louis exhibited that automatic and uncanny cheerfulness which he showed in all the tragic moments of his life, disconcerting our sympathy by its inappropriate good-humour. They reached the Tuileries by torch-light; supper was served at ten. Louis astonished all beholders by his prodigious appetite. "The King looked radiant [writes a witness]. The Queen had on a little black cloak, a hood, no rouge. She has lost her fixed, eagle gaze and the proud carriage of her head."

The Assembly lost no time in following the King to Paris. The great affair of both was the new constitution. Louis was as well persuaded as any revolutionary of the need for reform. Had he not tried in vain for fifteen years to govern his kingdom? He had begun with a Liberal minister, Turgot, and Turgot had found the task too much for him, giving as his excuse "*La France n'a pas de constitution!*" And then Louis had tried a Conservative premier; but M. de Calonne had made a far worse mess of it, and had finally declared the kingdom "impossible to govern."

We have seen in a preceding chapter what Voltaire thought of the French constitution, its tissue of contradictions, its incoherent jumble of laws. France was an agglomeration of duchies and provinces acquired in differing conditions at different times. Some were *Pays d'état*, represented by their own provincial States or Chambers; others were *Pays d'administration*, governed directly by the Crown; north of the Loire there were *Pays de droit coutumier*, whose legal system was based on feudal law and barbarian tradition: each town, each province had its own variety; while, south

of the great dividing river, the country was *Pays de droit écrit* and its jurisdiction a modified survival of Roman Law. Some of these provinces succumbed beneath the load of their taxation, while, a few miles off, a neighbouring district would be almost enfranchised from the general expenses of the State. The first task of the constituent deputies was to break up all this muddle and to reduce to some sort of rule, and order, and unity the incoherence and the inconsistency of France.

Their work was far from perfect, and yet they did wonders. They sketched the first rough draught of the France we know to-day. The Revolution was to draw up six Constitutions in the space of eleven years. They all followed, in essentials, the plan of the *Constituante*. It began with a clean slate; the provinces, with all their discrepancies, were abolished; France was divided into eighty-three departments, each with its subsidiary districts and cantons. In every canton a justice of the peace, in every district a county court, in every department a Court of Assize, and in Paris a Court of Appeal. The same law was administered from Flanders to Provence and from Lorraine to Brittany. A magistrate was no longer an official who purchased his place and bequeathed it, with his other property, to his son.

The law was henceforth above all privilege. The King might no longer, by virtue of his sealed orders (*lettres de cachet*), send a man to prison at his own sweet will. The nobles had no longer their private courts and their rights (even, in some cases, of life and death) over their subjects. The clergy were forbidden to incarcerate the erring nun and the disobedient priest according to a system of their own. The law was

universal and equal. France was not yet free, but a great blow had been struck for equality.

It would have been well, perhaps, if the Revolution could have stopped here and have henceforth developed by a process of evolution. The King was generous, humane, and much less of a fool than is generally supposed. But too many passions and interests were engaged; the financial question was too involved; the army too disorganized and deliquescent, owing to the long abuse of privilege. And Louis himself, it must be owned, though a good creature, had neither the genius, the constancy, nor the intellect which alone could ride the storm.

His position in the new Constitution was ambiguous and ill-defined. He might propose no law—the laws were voted by the Chamber; but he had a right of *veto*—that is to say, he might delay, suspend, retard the execution of any law voted by the Chamber for a term of five or six years. The Assembly was to be renewed by election every two years; the King might suspend a law till the next legislation but one; if, after that time, the deputies stuck to their text, he must needs recall the veto. But, as a matter of fact, the rebellious, resentful nation contested every application of this right of veto, which was to prove, as we shall see, the undoing of the King.

He had, in addition, the right to declare war and to choose his ministers; that is to say, the nominal right. But woe betide him if he called to office an unpopular premier; and the first war he declares, it will be with tears in his eyes, for the people's enemy is the King's ally: Austria. The unfortunate Louis seems to us a King Log. If he had been more of a King Log it might have been well for him. But he took the Constitution

seriously, learned it by heart, attempted not to overpass the limits of his restricted sovereignty (which must have seemed so humble to the grandson of Louis Quinze), and used in all good faith the kingly rights which were set down in the charter as his due appurtenances.

The King and his family passed a melancholy year in Paris, prisoners, or almost, in their half-dismantled chambers of the Tuileries. If any ray of hope, as summer came again, shot across the gloom of their long confinement, it was not the result of the plots and plans of the venturesome Royalists who (when so many emigrated) followed their sovereign to Paris and set up house, so to speak, in the very jaws of the lion. The bright eyes of the Royalist ladies who, covered with white favours and Bourbon lilies, came and went temerariously and promised help from Coblentz, Condé, Cobourg, Brunswick, Pitt—all quarters of the compass—these were not the dispensers of comfort; but for one summer's day the King believed that he and his people had sworn a covenant, that peace reigned between them, and that the days of Henri Quatre had dawned again.

It was on the 14th of July, the anniversary of the Fall of the Bastille. A great public festival was to commemorate the event and to celebrate the still unterminated task of the Constituent Assembly. Every little town in France was to send its delegates, chosen from the volunteer militia of the provincial municipalities, while Paris was to assemble all the bodies of the State to witness the solemn conjunction of monarch and nation. A year later, in a mood of bitter resentment, when Louis drew up the manifesto which explained the reasons of his flight to Varennes, he

reverted with a sudden tenderness to the memory of that one halcyon day—"*les momens les plus doux de mon séjour à Paris*"—and to the attachment and devotion which the citizen militia of France had then shown to his person. They had come in their cohorts—these *bourgeois* volunteers—from all the towns and villages of the kingdom; by their spontaneous adhesion they reconstituted France; and, in the midst of sceptical, dissatisfied Paris, they represented the mass of the nation, enthusiastic for Freedom and the King, and seeing between their two idols no incompatibility.

For their congregation the great bare field of the Champ de Mars had been surrounded by tiers of grassy steps or benches, rising in an amphitheatre occupied by two thousand Parisians. In the middle of the plain rose the Altar of France: "*l'Autel de la Patrie*"—four-square, with at each corner a group of a hundred priests, their white surplices barred by a tricolour sash. At the altar itself, Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun, said Mass while twelve hundred musicians played military music. And all round, in the free space between the altar and the amphitheatre, moved the fourteen thousand Volunteers beneath their innumerable banners. In front of the altar, for the King, was placed a solitary throne. The Queen, the royal family, the National Assembly were seated on a Grand Stand. The Mass over, forty cannon voiced their hoarse reverberation. The King rose; he and the Nation swore their solemn covenant. All day it had rained, but at that solemn moment the sun came out in a sudden ray. Countless voices, in a paroxysm of hope and enthusiasm, sent up the cry: "Long live the Citizen-King!" The delegates of Touraine presented Louis with a ring that had belonged to Henri Quatre. In that moment, the vision

of a monarchy renewed—a popular and prosperous reign—dazzled the eyes of the prisoner of the people. The Queen herself forgot her cold and arrogant hostility. She sprang forward, lifting her little boy in her arms: "Here is my son! He and I share all the feelings of the King!"

"*Tous généralement sont ivres d'amour pour le Roi et la famille royale,*" wrote a spectator two days later. But alas! even in that hour of enthusiasm, a rift in the ground, which was soon to become a yawning chasm, divided the King and the Country.

The principal reason of the Revolution had, after all, been financial. The King had summoned the States-General in order to avert imminent bankruptcy, and, so far, they had bestowed on the country, not prosperity, but the promise of liberty for all and equality before the law, magnificent gifts, but perfectly compatible, it seemed, with ruin. The unjust and unequal pressure of taxes had been removed—with the result that the country was poorer than ever. The emigration of the aristocracy had in a great measure dried up one possible source of wealth. Another remained: the Church possessed one-fifth of the entire national territory.

The Assembly, with ruin staring them in the face, proposed nothing less than to confiscate the estates of the Church, undertaking in exchange to distribute a suitable pension to priests and Bishops and to maintain their establishments for the relief of the poor. In the first enthusiasm of the Revolution, all ranks of the Church were not entirely opposed to this measure; the forfeiture of the Church lands, compensated by regular salaries, was to be a levelling measure, mulcting heavily the great ecclesiastical lords and rich abbots,

but bringing ease and relief from care to many a poor parish presbytery and village convent.

The fortune of the Church had long tempted the needy governments of France. It was no revolutionary, for it was Louis Quatorze, who wrote in his *Memoirs*: "Les rois sont seigneurs absolus . . . de tous les biens, tant des séculiers que des ecclésiastiques, pour en user comme sages économies selon les besoins de l'Etat." It is a theory which the Revolution was to adopt and expand—its first requisition—and the Church was not to be alone in learning that any form of absolute Unity implies confiscation of private property.

The State, then, declared the Church lands forfeit to the country. . . . But who, in that hour of need and upheaval, would purchase these great estates? Who would consent to despoil Mother Church, on his own responsibility? The Government decided on a plan, ingenious enough, though in the end it almost ruined France. The State decided to use this vast mass of property as the guarantee for an emission of paper money. Each bank-bill was, so to speak, a plot of ground, and might at any time be exchanged for it. Here was no bubble scheme—no South-Sea figment—but solid property, so much vineyard, or meadow, or cornland, which a man might go and see, on which he held a sort of mortgage or preference share. The towns subscribed for immense quantities of these "*assignats*," as they were called (because they were assigned on a given piece of land)—four hundred million francs' worth of them were set in circulation.

At first all went merrily as a marriage-bell; the country appeared to emerge at last from the slough of poverty. The notes were popular; they seemed to

have a double guarantee—that of the municipalities, and that of the real estate behind them. And all would have been well, perhaps, had the Government known moderation; but in the space of seven years it issued bank-bills to the amount of forty-five milliards of francs, of which not one tenth part was covered by the Church lands, and the *assignats* lost ninety-nine per cent. of their value. In 1796 a bill for a hundred francs, accepted in the spring of 1790 for its full worth in gold, had fallen to the ridiculous equivalent of fifty centimes in silver. And an inextricable system of brokerage and stock-jobbing absorbed the energies of French finance.

This is glancing ahead. In 1790 the forfeiture of the Church lands seemed an issue from the dreary maze of national debt, violent indeed and unjust, yet which the conciliatory Pope, Pius VI, might have been brought to accept (if any one had taken the pains to conciliate *him*), since in fact it was on this selfsame basis that the Concordat was founded in 1801 between his successor and Napoleon Bonaparte, First Consul. But that sectarian fury which has so often misled France led the Government to attack Rome not only in her material possessions but in her spiritual privileges. Without approaching the Vatican, the Revolution reconstructed the inconvenient, unequal dioceses of France into eighty-three brand-new bishoprics to suit the eighty-three new departments, and decreed a Civil Constitution of the Clergy which made the State, not the Pope, the Head of the Church. And the priests, as civil functionaries of the State, were ordered to take an oath of allegiance.

A day was set apart for the solemn vow. But, to the surprise—indeed, the secret consternation—of the

Government, nearly all the bishops and more than half the clergy refused to bow down the knee in the House of Rimmon. They awaited, they said, the decision of the Pope, to whom they had appealed. But the most painful dilemma of all was the King's. Louis was a strict Catholic. He was not, like the Queen, essentially hostile to the Revolution and all its works. Bred and born in the theory of autocracy, he was nevertheless intermittently haunted by the idea that, like Henri Quatre, he might one day reign over a happier France renewed, which should issue, as from a lustral bath, from years of discord and distress. He really admired the great undertakings of the Constituent Assembly: the creation of the departments, the unification of law, the abolition of feudal privilege. Louis had a long head for detail, much good sense, a certain administrative capacity, and a unique experience of the difficulties of government. He was not, like Marie-Antoinette, a creature of instincts and prejudices. He really desired at any rate at this moment, to collaborate with the Assembly. But he was a devout and loyal Catholic far more profoundly than he was a Constitutional King. He dared not sanction what appeared to him a sacrilege, an abjuration. Neither dared he exercise his nominal right of veto. He wrote to Pius VI imploring his assistance and indulgence. He sought to gain time. But ministers bade him not to resist the will of the sovereign people. But the Assembly harassed and harried him to promulgate the thrice-odious law. And the Pope reserved his answer. And finally, after a month's hesitation, the reluctant King, on the 26th of December, 1790, most weakly gave his consent to the decree and to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.

Three months later the Pope solemnly repudiated the law. Many of the clergy who had so far conformed resisted now and were suspended from their functions and emoluments. In front of these heroic non-jurors, the poor King felt the remorse of Peter. He fell ill with remorse and nervous fatigue. "I had rather be King of Metz!" he declared to his wife's friend, Fersen; "but this state of things cannot go on much longer." The "*Roi Très Chrètien*" felt himself a schismatic. His ostensible chaplain was a conforming priest; Louis would not accept the Sacrament from his hands. Easter was at hand, and the question of the King's Communion became an affair of national, of European, importance: would he approach the altar with the friends or with the enemies of the Revolution? The unfortunate monarch hoped to escape to his palace at Saint-Cloud for an Easter holiday, and there make his peace with Heaven unobserved.

But on the 18th of April, 1791, as the King and his family settled themselves in their royal coach, about noon, on a fine spring day, happily disposed for departure, an extraordinary popular fermentation seethed in an instant all round the Tuileries. In vain La Fayette enjoined on his National Guards to clear the road; the soldiers joined the people, declaring the King should not pass. For an hour and three-quarters, there he sat, immovable, smiling, bland, while the Queen fumed at his side. At last La Fayette had to come, very hangdog, and tell the royal pair that they could not, with any hope of safety, leave the palace. "They won't let me go?" said Louis. "Eh? They won't let me go? Well, then, I must stay!" and he repeated three times this sentence, murmuring that it was strange that, having given liberty to France, he should not himself

be free. The Queen turned her blazing eyes on La Fayette: "At least *now* you will admit that we are prisoners!" she exclaimed.

That evening she sent a secret message to her brother, the Emperor; and from that hour Louis listened to the plans of escape which the Queen was constantly preparing. He considered himself a captive, in durance vile, and, as such, released from the obligation of sincerity. A consent wrung by coercion is not binding. Only, Louis was too prodigal of his acquiescence. When, for instance, on the very morrow of this scene, he surprised the Assembly by a friendly call in which he assured the deputies of his determination to maintain the Constitution, "including the Civil Constitution of the Clergy," it is impossible to acquit the King of a natural turn for double dealing.

That very Easter (April, 1791) the Pope for the second time rejected the proposed reform of the Church, the creation of new bishoprics, the dissolution of monasteries, the confiscation of Church lands, and the supremacy of the State. Great was the fury of the leaders of the Revolution. The Government revenged itself on its unhappy hostage, Louis Seize. They insisted that he should confess himself to a conforming priest: he confessed; that on Easter Day he should receive the Sacrament at those desecrated hands: and he approached the Holy Table. They told him to write to all the courts in Europe stating that he was under no constraint: and he assured the sovereigns of his liberty (though doubtless he sent other letters by other ways). The King, bland, acquiescent, appeared dazed, fallen into his second childhood.

But his mind was really busy working out a plan of escape. He saw all the difficulties of the situation.

Unlike the Queen—so much more a Queen than a Frenchwoman—unlike his Austrian wife, Louis did not desire the armed intervention of Austria and Prussia. He remembered Poland, and he was quite aware that any foreign army would require its price in the form of territory. He distrusted Austria, Prussia, Russia, and England most of all. He distrusted his brothers. He knew that the *émigrés* meant to declare him incapable of reigning, to proclaim his son under the Regency of *Monsieur*. He was therefore really averse to a foreign invasion. That was the forlorn hope, the last, grimmest expedient of the desperate. On the other hand, Louis could no longer endure his prison of Paris, where neither his life, his family, nor his conscience was in safety. "I had rather be King of Metz!" he had said to Count Fersen. And his project was precisely to escape to Metz, where the army grouped on the eastern frontier under the command of the Marquis de Bouillé was supposed to be still devoted to the Crown. Surrounded by these faithful troops he would march on Paris. And without need of any Austrians or Prussians at his heels would make peace with his rebellious subjects generously, magnanimously, *à la Henri Quatre:* "Revenez à votre Roi! Il sera toujours votre père, votre meilleur ami: quel plaisir n'aura-t-il pas à oublier toutes ses injures personnelles, et de se revoir au milieu de vous, lorqu'une constitution, qu'il aura librement acceptée, fera que notre sainte religion sera respectée!" exclaims Louis in the extraordinary farrago of puerility, shrewish recrimination, justice, and common sense which he left behind him—pinned, so to speak, to his pincushion in the form of a letter addressed to all Frenchmen—on the night of his escape.

For on the night of June the 20th (1791), in the disguise of an upper servant, a sort of steward, the King passed through the gates of the Tuileries. The Queen left separately; she had been out in the town all afternoon, and, about seven o'clock, had come home very ostensibly, holding her little boy by the hand. Now, having changed her summer gown for a sober travelling-dress, she found herself alone in the streets at night, free, as she thought; and, in her high, glad spirits, finding herself, as she crossed the Carrousel, face to face with the carriage of La Fayette, she gave the wheels a little derisive flick with a light cane that she carried in her hand: she could not endure La Fayette! That was the final flare of the Queen's gaiety. . . .

Meanwhile the Dauphin and his governess, with Madame Elisabeth and her niece the Princess Royal, escaping separately, joined the King and Queen at the corner of the rue de l'Echelle and entered with them a very large, roomy travelling-carriage provided by Count Fersen, who himself mounted the box as coachman for the first stage or so. They journeyed all night long and all the next day towards Bouillé's army at Montmédy, but at Sainte-Menehould, in the Argonne, they were recognized by the postmaster, who rode on and outran the King's carriage.

Somehow they missed the reconnaissances which the army at Montmédy was sending out to meet and escort them. And the postmaster rode on. And so at Varennes they heard the tramp of galloping horses, the cries of pursuit, and found the bridge barricaded by a hay-cart turned sideways across it. Next came the enforced halt at the shop of the village mayor, Sauce the grocer; and poor, proud, passionate Marie-

Antoinette's imploring and beseeching of Madame Sauce to further their escape:

"He is your King and my husband!" cried the Queen, seated between two bundles of tallow candles, in the store-room, upstairs.

"*Que voulez-vous, madame?*" says Madame Sauce. "Your situation is much to be deplored; but M. Sauce would pay the penalty if he let you go. They would cut off his head! A woman must think of her husband!"

And again the poor Queen "*dans une extrême agitation*" began explaining that that was precisely her case—that the King's life was not safe in Paris—when La Fayette's emissary rode up, followed by three Members of the Assembly, to escort the King and his family back to Paris.

Perhaps even then they might have got away, for a party of Bouillé's hussars came galloping up at last, and though their loyalty was more than questionable, still the habit of discipline and the love of a fight might have carried the day, but Louis' hatred of bloodshed was too strong to run the risk:

"Will it be hot?" he said to Major Goguelat, his amateur courier.

"Very hot," replied that truthful gentleman. And the King determined to try another way. In one of those inexplicable effusions which, in him, were always the sign of a tremendous inward tension, he approached his captors, and, throwing himself in the arms of the chief of them, he exclaimed:

"Yes, I am your King! Placed in the capital in the midst of poignards and bayonets, I have come here, in the provinces, to seek among you the peace and liberty you all enjoy! I cannot stay in Paris without risking death for myself and my family."

And as he pronounced these words, the King embraced, one after the other, all the astonished persons present.

Meanwhile, upstairs the ladies of the party tried by every wile, including simulated illness, to delay the moment of departure, hoping for the arrival of further troops from Montmédy. The King fell asleep, and on waking said he would go in peace, but to Montmédy, not to Paris. He should have held out a little longer. Repacked at last in their travelling-coach, in company with two of the deputies from Paris, the royal party had scarcely turned their sad, reluctant faces towards the capital, their carriage was still rumbling among the vineyards of Varennes, when in the distance the townspeople descried a strong detachment of the regiment called Royal-Allemand hurrying to the King's relief. But they were too late.

Even in that hour of disenchantment and despair —an hour (or rather a day) which turned her abundant blonde hair snow-white, "*comme les cheveux d'une femme de soixante-dix ans*"—Marie-Antoinette discovered a new resource: she would make to herself friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness! On those two days of their enforced return to Paris, the captive Queen gave forth such an effluence of character and courage, of disinterested zeal for the public welfare, of enterprise and capacity, that (being a very graceful and lovely woman, and, into the bargain, a Queen to the tips of her fingers) she ended by capturing one of her captors and persuaded him to espouse the cause of the constitutional monarchy.

He was a young Protestant from Grenoble, named Barnave—the very type of those gifted and cultured young men of the middle class whom the blocking of all

advancement had forced into the Revolution. Although a Revolutionary, he was a monarchist: a Jacobin who fain would have made the King walk between the shafts while the Club held the whip. At first, when the Queen spoke to him, he turned aside on principle and looked out of the carriage window. But she soon brought him to see the error of his ways, and before they entered Paris, he was her knight, no less than Fersen. So much courage (he wrote one day) in such misfortune had engraved an ineffaceable impression on his heart.

Barnave was sincere. As for the Queen, she certainly felt the charm of the eloquent, high-minded, chivalrous young deputy: "*Si jamais la puissance revient dans nos mains, le pardon de Barnave est d'avance ècrit dans nos cœurs*" she exclaimed to Madame Campan, who more than once expresses in her *Memoirs* the astonishment with which she heard the Queen reiterate her high opinion of the Jacobin. And it is possible that, in her distress, Marie-Antoinette may have looked upon the Constitutionalists as a sort of second string to her bow—a possible protection against both *émigrés* and Republicans. But her secret correspondence with Barnave and Fersen, which she placed in Fersen's hands, has lately been discovered in a castle in Sweden, and reveals her continual traffic with the Powers. If Marie-Antoinette in an hour of despair accepted the Constitution and hoped by the aid of Barnave to secure for her feeble husband—and for her son—a popular throne, the throne of liberty and progress, that was but the illusion of a moment; and Barnave was but a straw she clutched at with a drowning hand—like Mirabeau, like Danton, nay, even like La Fayette; for with all of these the Queen intrigued. . . .

And all of them had an excellent opinion of her capacity. "The only man the King has to depend on is the Queen," said Mirabeau. Barnave's letters are full of her character and courage. "The King is incapable of reigning [wrote La Marck]. The Queen might supply his incapacity if she could attend to affairs with method and perseverance, and instead of according a fragment of her trust to a variety of counsellors, bestow all her confidence on one adviser."

What gave a momentary consistency to the Queen's intrigues with Barnave was her hatred of the *émigrés* and her distrust of the Great Powers. Her brother, the Emperor, had written to her, doubtless, or at least had let her understand (as he wrote quite plainly and freely to his ambassador in Petersburg), that he hoped to preserve the monarchy in France, but that the person of the King was quite indifferent to him:

"I do not mind who sits upon the throne of France—whether it be Louis XVI, or Louis XVII, or Charles X, so as that throne be restored and the Monster of the Riding-school duly crushed."

The Monster was the National Assembly, which held its sessions in the Riding-school of the Tuileries. Pitt had replied in the same spirit.

Both Louis and the Queen were well aware of these sentiments in their defenders outside the kingdom. Their endeavour was to steer a course clear of these false friends and of the growing party which demanded a republic.

That was another result of the flight to Varennes. Until the King's escape there had been no serious thought of a French Republic; those whom the court called Republicans, like La Fayette, merely intended to reduce the King to the status of a hereditary Presi-

dent. (A few fantastic journalists, such as Camille Desmoulins, are not a political party.) But the flight to Varennes had filled Paris with a sombre passion of contempt and indignation. Utter silence had greeted the return of the sovereigns. The crowds massed in the streets gave voice to neither word nor cry. Not a hat was raised, not a head was bowed, in salute. The National Guards, lining the roadway, held their arms reversed, as for a funeral. The Queen bent her shamed face almost down to her knees; we know that the thick locks piled above it turned white during that journey. The King alone continued to smile and to treat the situation lightly, with his usual exasperating and tactless pleasantry.

After that flight, the King had been suspended. In the manifesto which he had left behind him Louis had declared that he considered his past oaths enforced by constraint and not binding; in these conditions the Assembly could not trust him; and while it elaborated a new Constitution, which still might conciliate King and nation, Louis Seize was considered a State prisoner, without authority. The Assembly governed in its own name and kept the Great Seal in its own charge; no cataclysm followed (at least not immediately), and the people began to murmur "We can do without a king!" Leaders of the Assembly such as Brissot and Condorcet began a campaign against the "Royal Automaton." A fanatic doctor, named Marat, just then coming into note, declared in an extraordinary burst of prophecy (foreseeing Napoleon before he, so to speak, existed): "We want no king, but a military dictator." Another party suggested offering the throne to the radical Duke of Orleans, who called himself Philippe Egalité. It was at that moment that the

Queen in her despair sent to Barnave an appeal for help and counsel. Barnave, with his friends Lameth and Duport, ruled at that moment the Left of the Assembly. He declared, and he believed, that it was in his power to reseat the King on his throne, if the Queen would in all things follow his direction. He with his friends seceded from the Jacobin Club and inaugurated a new Constitutional Club—and a new Constitutional party—in the desecrated monastery of the Feuillants, or Bernardines, facing the Tuileries gardens. For some months—till the end of August—there seemed a chance that the Feuillants, as the new Club called itself, after all might save the monarchy. . . .

"When I came back to Paris on the 25th of August [wrote Madame Campan], I found things much calmer than I could have dared to hope. Every one was talking of the King's acceptation of the Constitution, and of the public festivities to which that would give rise. The Queen began to hope in a happier order of events, though, on the 17th of July, she had passed some wretched hours, listening to the cannon thundering on the Champ de Mars during the scuffle of the Constitutionalists with the Jacobins who demanded that the King should be tried and judged."

On that occasion the Constitutionalists had come off best, and La Fayette, by shooting down a sufficient number of the insurgents, had almost provoked a Royalist reaction. In September the King accepted the Constitution and was greeted by the populace with shouts of gratitude and joy. The word on all lips was: "The Revolution is now at an end!" . . . But revolutions never know where to stop. They advance in great waves, each billow different from and deeper than the last. After the acceptation of the Constitu-

tion, the Constituent Assembly had been dissolved—or rather had dissolved itself—with the proviso that none of its members might be elected to the new Chamber. The elections therefore brought into power and place an entirely new set of deputies and officials, men of no experience of the great world of affairs and generally recruited from a much lower class of the population. Those cultured and gifted "*Quatrevingt-neuvistes*"—those men of '89—who hitherto have held the scene, give place to a class, fanatic and illiterate, which, unhappily, is not to be the last. A third wave will bring to the surface the terrible dregs of anarchy.

The Legislative Assembly met on the 1st of October, 1791. Almost its first act was to declare all the *émigrés* suspect, to summon them to return to France before the ensuing New Year's Day (1st of January, 1792), and, in case of contumacy, to confiscate their estates and possessions and to sentence them to death. As for the priests (forty-two thousand of them were "refractory"), they were enjoined to lose no time in swearing allegiance to the State as Head of the Church; otherwise they would be considered rebels, and as such liable to instant arrest and imprisonment. . . . When these decrees were presented to the King, he fell into a state of almost demented melancholy. For ten days he pronounced no word, even to his family. Perhaps, in his dejection, he might have given his sanction to these hated laws, for he foresaw the results of his refusal. But Marie-Antoinette insisted on the veto, flinging herself at her husband's feet in tragic scenes of entreaty, "*en employant tantôt des images faîtes pour l'effrayer, tantôt les expressions de sa tendresse pour lui,*" as Madame Campan tells us, having witnessed her heart-rending appeal.

For six months the King hesitated, procrastinated, torn between his Queen and his counsellors, until with either party he lost all credit. At first his "*J'examinerai*" had been received with the respect due to the decision of the responsible head of a State. But while Louis continued to hesitate the nation was moving violently; they soon lost contact. In the spring of 1792 the Girondin Ministry required the King, as the Executive Power of the People, to declare war upon Austria. No measure could be more wounding to the court. The Queen was an Austrian Princess; her marriage had been made to cement an Austrian alliance; and even at that hour Austria, though in arms, was still officially the ally of France.

"*Tant mieux!*" cried the Queen, who had reached the last paroxysm of exasperation. But Louis, when he declared war, could not see the paper in his hands for the tears in his eyes. He considered his crown the victim of two opposing forces: the extremists at home and the invading *émigrés*.

The war was popular with the nation, which for so many centuries had hated Austria; the alliance had never sunk in, so to speak, much deeper than the sphere of the court. But the war was another reason for resenting the influence of *l'Autrichienne*. The campaign began with grave reverses for the French; defeats, panics, routs. Nothing in these first disastrous battles presaged the glorious campaigns of the Republic. The troops were ill-prepared and inexperienced; in many regiments the officers, all noble, had deserted *en masse* to join the ranks of the returning absentees. (And that is how a young Corsican lieutenant in the regiment of La Fère, one Napoleon Buonaparte, found himself unexpectedly a captain.)

These were excuses for defeat, but the public did not accept them, and awaited the march of the Austrians on Paris in a mood of increasing exasperation.

On the 15th of June the King affirmed his veto; and the public thought him bolder because of the Austrian advance; there were howls of wrath against "Monsieur et Madame Véto." On the 20th the mob invaded the Tuileries; the King and Queen were insulted, their lives in danger. The populace, armed with bill-hooks and pikestaves, poured through the palace crying: "Recall the Veto! Recall the Veto! You have deceived us once; take care lest you deceive us again!" It was, says Hue, the King's faithful valet, "a walking forest of pikes." As on all occasions when courage means calm endurance rather than enterprise or dashing bravery, Louis showed the most remarkable valour. Hour followed hour: "Sanction the decrees! Choose between us and the *émigrés!* Banish the priests!" shrieked the insurgents. The King, with a quiet smile, replied that this was not the moment to examine the decrees, and that he saw nothing to make him change his opinion. And then, with that excessive effusion to which he was liable in such times of storm and stress, he added: "I, too, am a patriot!" and seizing the red cap of Liberty on the head of one of his assailants, he donned it himself. There was a moment of stupor. The fat pale King must have appeared an extraordinary spectacle—his dress disordered, half the powder shaken out of his hair, with that Phrygian cap tossing above his shy, awkward smile, as he stood in front of the excited mob, jogging the weight of his great body alternately from one foot on to the other, as was his wont. It was horribly hot, as it often is in Paris at midsummer; some one pro-

duced a bottle of common "blue" wine and a glass. The "patriots" quenched their thirst, and then, someone handing the glass to Louis, he drank too.

When at six o'clock the Mayor at last arrived (it was Pétion, one of the two deputies who had fetched the royal family from Varennes)—when Pétion, then, turned up, *festina lente*, and doubtless hoping to find the King's head on a pike, the mob was good-naturedly roaring: "*Le Roi boit!*"—"The King drinks!" as they cry on Twelfth Night when the reveller who finds the bean in his piece of cake has to pay a glass all round to the rest of the party.

In fine, the King's good-humour, his unusual firmness too (for not a jot did he yield in all that day), together with the patience and grace displayed by the Queen and Madame Elisabeth (who had had their own attack to sustain), increased rather than diminished the chances of the Constitutionalists. The extreme demagogues looked on in dismay. The experiment had missed fire—a mere flash in the pan. One Danton, a lawyer turned politician, whose criminal genius stuck at no scruple, resolved that he would try again. Danton believed, with a passionate conviction, that the welfare of France required the downfall of the King, and, by fair means or foul, he meant to compass it. How could the King conduct a war against the very Powers who were hurrying to his defence? After the 20th of June the Tuileries seemed far more powerful than they had been before. So Danton arranged, for the 10th of August, the final crash.

Danton, the Titan, the giant of the Revolution, was a man beyond the bounds of good and evil; a crime did not frighten him, however inhuman (as we shall see

in September), if he thought it for the public good. He liked to think that he was a sort of surgeon who, cutting off the gangrened limb, saved the endangered body. The *raison d'état* appeared to him a higher morality which exonerated all excess.

Whatever the obliquity of his moral sense, his mental glance was piercing and direct. Louis *was* in secret correspondence with the Kings of Spain, of Sweden, with Catherine of Russia, with Leopold of Austria, as to the best manner "*pour arrêter les factieux*." The Queen, especially, was constantly in touch with the enemies of France. On the 21st of June we find her writing to Fersen:

"Do not be too anxious about me. Believe that courage always commands respect. Our last expedient will ensure us time enough for them to come and save us. But what long weeks they will be! I dare not write more. Adieu. Hasten, if you can, the help that is promised for our deliverance."

And she adds in sympathetic ink:

"I am still alive. But it's a miracle. The 20th was an awful day."

A few days later, on the 3rd of July, the Queen found means to send another note:

"Our position is terrible. But I feel quite brave. Do not be too anxious. Something within me tells me that we shall be delivered."

"*J'ai en moi quelque chose qui me dit que nous serons sauvés.*" She repeats the words to Madame Campan. On one of those July nights, while the moonlight flooded her bedchamber, she said to her faithful friend and follower: "Next month the moon will shine upon me free, and the King disengaged from all his chains!"

"And she said she was acquainted with the itinerary

of the Prussian advance, and the line of march followed by the French princes. . . . On such and such a day they would be at Verdun, they were about to besiege Lille; she knew all their stages. . . . But she was anxious about what might happen in Paris during the interval. She spoke of the King's lack of energy: 'The King is no coward; he has plenty of passive courage, but he is weighed down by shyness and a strange self-diffidence. He does not know how to command, and the right word does not come readily to his lips. . . . As for me, I should love to act, jump on a horse, and ride!' "

Meanwhile Austrians, Prussians, *émigrés*, were crossing the frontier. The fury of the French became more and more alarming and perfectly comprehensible. (Write Petrograd for Paris, and we of 1918 understand the situation at one glance.) La Fayette hurried to Paris in the hope of aiding the escape of the sovereigns. "Better die [cried Marie-Antoinette] than be saved by M. de La Fayette!" She still hoped, poor lady, to be saved by the Duke of Brunswick. Brunswick, with his German faith in the efficacy of Terror, warned the Parisians that not one stone of their city should be left upon another if so much as a hair of King or Queen were harmed. The threat inflamed to madness the excitable blood of the Celts and the French defeats served to fan the fever. The drums beat in the streets; the great black flag streaming from the towers of Notre-Dame proclaimed the country in danger; stands were erected on the public places, and on these scaffoldings a registrar with his ledger took down the names of the recruits, young and old, of every class, who volunteered for military service. . . .

"You must wait ten days before Brunswick can be in France," wrote Fersen to the Queen. . . .

The time seemed intolerably long. "I wish they would put us in a tower," said the Queen to Madame Campan; "in a tower by the side of the sea." She had once said much the same to Danton: "You should put us in a tower for three months and forget us."

And they were soon to put her in a tower.

The evening of the 9th of August was stifling; all Paris was in the streets. One of those mysterious rumours which rise in a crowd like a ground-swell passed from lip to lip: "Something is going to happen!" At a quarter to twelve the great bell of the Cordeliers (the Franciscan convent where Danton presided over the demagogic Club) rang out in great heavy, isolated notes; six churches in the neighbourhood responded in the same impressive dreary toll. It was the tocsin.

It was Danton in person who had set the bell-ringers to work. Then he passed to the Town Hall, deposed the Town Council, and installed the new Commune of Paris: the "*Commune insurrectionnelle*," whose very name is the programme of a riot. And the attack on the Tuileries was decided.

If Danton had found in front of him another Danton, there yet might have been a chance in the King's favour: at least, a famous tug-of-war; at worst, a chance to perish gloriously. But we know the timid, undecided character of the King; his horror of bloodshed. If we count the Swiss Guards and the gendarmerie of the suburbs, summoned in haste to Paris and massed in the Tuileries in anticipation of an attack; if we count also the Royalist gentlemen who, on learning the King's danger, flocked to the palace summarily

will not save her nor the Dauphin. A belated Perseus, he will see the Monster of the Riding-school devour her and her little son, before he can snatch from that doom the young Princess of France, petrified by misfortune into a statue of sad remembrance. We shall meet our prince again, thirty years later, as Charles X, King for half a dozen years ere he go out again into exile at Holyrood or Goeritz.

For again the monarchy shall fall.

Another young prince learned in that fateful August, with a surprise not wholly unmixed with approval, that the monarchy had fallen in France. This was the heir of Orleans, the son of Philippe-Egalité, the great-great-grandson of the Regent, the pupil of Madame de Genlis—that young Duke of Chartres who was, at that time, the model, the Prince Charming, of all Europe. Brave, gifted, accomplished, liberal, and rich, with an army of politicians scheming in his favour, the young colonel of dragoons in Dumouriez's army appeared infinitely more favoured by fortune than the Corsican artillery captain. But Napoleon and the Restoration will make him wait his turn. Not until 1830 will Louis-Philippe ascend the throne of France. And he too, in his turn, shall abdicate and die in exile.

The monarchy in France has fallen. . . . And it shall fall many a time again!

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PART IV

THE REVOLUTION AND EUROPE

CHAPTER I

THE REIGN OF TERROR

To the monarchy succeeded the Republic.

Seldom has any government come into being in such a tragic hour. The Prussians were before Verdun and Longwy; the Austrians were laying siege to Lille; the French army was wholly disorganized—the soldiers in a large proportion uninstructed volunteers; in many regiments the officers had deserted to join the invading forces hastening to the relief of the King. The Republic, it is true, possessed several brilliant generals: Dumouriez, Pichegru, Moreau; but she was not sure of their loyalty, and, as a matter of fact, these great captains were all to pass into the ranks of her enemies. Such as it was, the army was cruelly hampered by the shortage of provisions and munitions. . . . As for the country—the principles of the provinces were still an unknown quantity: the South and West were suspected of Royalism; and Paris, which had invented the Republic, was torn between two parties whose clash and conflict might at any moment strike out the flame of civil war.

After the fall of the monarchy the Constitution of 1790 was naturally good for nothing. A new Assembly, the Legislative, was to meet in the autumn in order to elaborate a republican code. During the two

months of interregnum, although the ministers in office were chiefly Girondins, with every week the opposition gained a greater power.

The men of the moment were the deputies of the Extreme Left: the ultra-democrats, backed by the Clubs (Jacobin and Cordelier) and the terrible agitators of the Commune. Despite many rancours and rivalries, they were united by one great article of faith which they all held in common: the supremacy of Paris. Paris was the natural King of France in the eyes of the Mountain (the Left of the Chamber was known as the Mountain because the advanced parties sat at the summit of the amphitheatre which served for the sessions of the Assembly).

No theory was more repugnant to their opponents, "the deputies of Bordeaux": the Gironde. Roughly speaking, we may say that the Gironde represented the spirit of the provinces—especially the provinces of the South and the West. The Girondins were partisans of a Democratic, a Liberal, an "Athenian" Republic. They were opposed to any form of dictatorship, but especially to the absolute sway of Paris, "Infernal Paris." Paris (they loved to say) is a department, and, as such, has a right to an eighty-third share of power and influence, no more. Especially did they dread the reckless tyranny of the Commune. They were men of Aquitaine, enlightened, eloquent, without the grim earnestness and fierce inventiveness of their antagonists. These men of the Gironde—of Bordeaux (Bordeaux is the capital of the department of the Gironde)—were the natural adversaries of the men of the Mountain, who were led by the deputies from Champagne and from Arras: Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just. Each group was a nucleus round

which gathered the representatives of the North, the elect of the South. Once more France was shaken and almost divided by their incompatibility. The members of the Gironde were the descendants of those learned, elegant rhetoricians and magistrates we have met in Ausonius' Burdigala. The deputies on the crest of the Mountain were those men of the North-east whom Cæsar praised as the bravest, most daring, and most ferocious of the Gauls: "*horum omnium fortissimi sunt Belgæ.*"

The Gironde was essentially Liberal and law-abiding. No less Republican than the Mountain and in some ways more extreme (the Gironde, not the Mountain, declared war on Austria), its activity was political rather than social. The very cornerstone of the doctrines of the Gironde was the liberty of the individual. To them the rights of property were sacred. These Aquitanians, with their classic culture and their Latin quotations, with their love of local life and local colour, with their mingling of democratic principles and traditional prejudice, had voted conscientiously a change of government, without any presage of the wild, mad, topsy-turvy world into which that measure was to introduce them. They had hoped to achieve liberty and make no sacrifice.

The men of the Mountain were a more deadly sort of theoricians; the Revolution was to them a faith —more than that: one of those terrible superstitions to which the Thugs, for instance, or the disciples of Juggernaut, are willing to immolate both enemies and friends. They, too, loved liberty; and yet were willing to sacrifice it to that dearer deity, Equality, or to that Holy of Holies, the Love of Country. But their patriotism, although intense, was narrow, and

embraced only those Frenchmen who were of their opinion. Their ideal was an oligarchy of Jacobins—say some three hundred thousand of them—controlling six or seven millions of Girondins, Feuillants, Royalists, or indifferents. I say Jacobins, for the Jacobins were to the Mountain what the Jesuits were to Rome: an incomparable organ of propaganda and defence. At first a mere Club, where the Breton members of the National Assembly used to meet at Versailles, the Society had moved its headquarters, to the desecrated convent of Whitefriars, or Jacobins, when the Assembly, in October '89, had followed the King to Paris. Here the whilom Breton Club, rebaptized Jacobin, became the very centre and focus of extreme democratic principles, with branches in all the towns, in many of the villages of France—some two thousand four hundred *Sociétés populaires*, established throughout the length and breadth of the Republic, entrusted with the most various functions and duties. Their duty was to watch the conduct of citizens and public bodies; to send constant reports to the central Society; to inspect and control the elections of local officials; to keep an anxious eye on the sayings and doings of all suspected persons, such as nobles, priests, men of wealth or standing, political opponents of any sort; they were also employed in the exercise of charity, in relieving the necessities of widows and orphans; in redressing injustice; in discovering deposits of saltpetre for the use of the armies: endless were the attributes of the *Sociétés populaires;* but the first and foremost was that of a perpetual and ubiquitous Vigilance Committee, a vast society of revolutionary police.

At the date which we have reached (1792) these

societies, charged with the political and moral supervision of the whole French public, were not as yet recruited from the illiterate class. Neither were they as a rule men of the culture and tradition that marked the Girondins, but needy journalists, doctors with a bee in their bonnet (like Marat), priests with "views," briefless barristers, local shopkeepers enriched by the acquisition of "national estates": *i. e.*, Church-lands or property confiscated by the Government on account of the emigration of the original owners; men of restless intelligence and enthusiastic principle, enchanted by their new importance; positive, able organizers whose quick suspicions and alert mistrust detected the least symptom of danger to the Republic and whose harsh patriotism punished without pity the least variation from the Tables of their Law. They were the Puritans of Liberty.

The Jacobin Club in Paris was the oracle of the Convention; its endless ramifications implanted Paris like a thorn in the flesh of the most distant provinces. There came a time when "to calumniate Paris" was a crime punishable by death. Yet, odious as were the means they employed, they ensured unity of direction, a central force and prompt action, in the hour of national danger. The Jacobins realized that Liberal traditions must be suspended during the tug-of-war. Let us recall the way they saved their country, and, if we cannot admire, we may excuse the greatness of their crimes and exclaim, with that fierce old Tory and Papist, J. de Maistre:

"Le mouvement révolutionnaire une fois établi . . . la France et la monarchie ne pouvait être sauvées que par le Jacobinisme. . . . Nos neveux, qui s'embarrasseront très peu de nos souffrances et

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I would not for the world palliate the massacres of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th of September; they, after the Saint-Bartholomew, are the deepest stain on the glorious robe of France. But we in our own days know the madness induced by spy-fever; and the political prisoners in the jails of Paris were reckoned as conspirators and spies. . . . I would not say that Danton designed and ordered those massacres; but it is clear he did nothing to prevent them. "*C'est moi qui ai tout fait,*" he said to the Duke of Chartres. "*Que m'importe d'être appelé buveur de sang?*" he cried to the Convention. "It was no popular movement, but a got up affair," wrote another demagogue, Robert Lindet. . . . It is probable that the Commune set the riot in movement; and Danton, Minister of Justice, moved no finger when the Commune's paid murderers broke into the prisons of Paris and in five days' steady work assassinated between twelve hundred and sixteen hundred political prisoners. For the thing suited his book; and probably they were spies.

"*Non ragionam di lor!*" If every great movement has its good and its bad angel, then on the slopes of the Argonne a voluntary sacrifice attested the nobler spirit of the Revolution. On the little hill of Valmy, under their new tricolour flag, Kellermann's volunteers in their wooden shoes and rough blue jackets rushed on the Prussians to the strains of the *Marseillaise*, shouting "*Vive la Nation!*" They carried the day. When, on the following Saturday, the Republic "one and indivisible" came legally into being

with the vote of the New Assembly, the Prussian army in retreat had turned its banners towards the Rhine.

The Austrians were still in the North; no peace had confirmed the retirement of the Prussians; and France was still on the verge of civil war, without an ally, without money or munitions, with an improvised army of ignorant volunteers. It was in these conditions that the Jacobins invented their splendid programme of reforms, which gave fourteen armies to the Republic and made France once more the first Great Power in Europe.

They had to invent, to this end, a system of policy not only novel in itself, but in disaccord with all their dearest theories. They had to improvise, in the heat of battle, a centralized government which was the pure negation of the sovereignty of the people, the rights of man, and individual liberty; they had, in the words of Marat, "to oppose the despotism of freedom to the despotism of kings." On the very morrow of Valmy, the Jacobins of Paris, confronted with the dire need of finding and furnishing an adequate armed force for the defence of the territory, struck out a new conception of property.

In their eyes private wealth was no longer an intangible family heritage and personal satisfaction; it was, although entrusted to the temporary keeping of individuals, the last resource and the last reserve of the State, its forlorn hope, and, as such, always liable to be required and requisitioned in any mortal extremity of the nation. In time of war, and especially in case of invasion, not a drop of French blood, not a coin of French gold, could be esteemed private property. The country had a prior claim on all possessions.

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"Industry, counsel, fortune, labour, these are gifts that most of us can bestow; we all can give our blood. Let each of us be found at his post. Let the young men fight; let the fathers of families forget their arms and transport their ammunition, while the women sew their tents and their uniforms and nurse the wounded; the very children can make lint and fold a bandage! Henceforth our houses must all be barracks, our market-places workshops: the Republic is one great beleaguered city and all of France a military camp." Such were the measures proposed by Barrère (the translator of Young's *Night Thoughts*) in the name of the Committee of Public Safety.

Almost the first act of the Convention was to put the King upon his trial. If a legitimate king can be guilty of high treason to his revolting subjects, I suppose that Louis XVI was guilty. It is certain that he had summoned the foreigner into France; that he intrigued against the Constitution he had accepted; but it was in defence of his life and his crown.

From the first day of the trial it was clear that the Gironde desired to save the King. The Gironde was not, like the Mountain, a sect of fanatics with a dogma to enforce. The Mountain was a block. The Gironde was compact of many varieties in one opinion; there were Constitutionalists and there were Republicans, but both alike upheld the earlier principles of the Revolution: the reverence for Justice, the cult of Law, the firm faith in the sovereignty of the People. The Constitution had declared the person of the King inviolable; therefore (said the Girondins), even if the King has done wrong, it is impossible to behead the King without consulting on so grave a subject the Sovereign People. They wished to go to the country,

to gain time, and were certain that a referendum would support their views. But the criterion of the Mountain was not law nor principle; they considered the present safety of the country: the "*Salut Public.*" It was expedient that one man should die for the people. They averred (and it is probable that they were right) that a referendum could only result in civil war. Their one chance, they thought, was to intimidate Royalists and Constitutionalists alike, to threaten the Gironde, to throw down the gauntlet to all the monarchs of Europe, and, by cutting off the head of a traitor-King—"*Louis le Traître,*" as Barrère called him—to place between France and her invaders an irreparable crime, an obstacle to any possible pact or peace.

"You are not judges; you are, and can be, only statesmen"—"*Vous n'êtes point des juges, vous n'êtes et ne pouvez être que des hommes d'état,*" said Robespierre to the tribunal of the Convention. "Cæsar was stabbed in the Senate, and two-and-twenty dagger thrusts were judged a sufficient formality," remarked Saint-Just.

What the Mountain wished was a *coup d'état,* boldly accepted, inspired by a political necessity. The Mountain said, as Danton had said in September: "I looked my crime straight in the face—and I chose it!"

This terrible doctrine of the *Salut Public* has always haunted the logical imagination of the French, and its apparitions have constantly heralded misfortune. The Saint-Bartholomew is the example that rises at once to one's mind, but there are earlier ones—such as the murder of the Knights-Templar under Philippe-le-Bel; and later ones—for instance, the Revocation

of the Edict of Nantes; last of all, there was the Dreyfus Affair. The *raison d'état* has always been the bane of France.

"We have to consider [said Robespierre] not justice but policy." There was calculation as well as vengeance, anger, and conviction in the Jacobin onslaught on the King. Unfortunate Louis XVI! He was the bone of contention between two raging parties at the very moment when his patience, his serenity, his simplicity in unexampled reverses (for Charles I was never treated with quite the same brutality) began to endear him to the hearts of, at least, the common people. They had never seen the King so close at hand. The sentries on duty at the Temple were chosen from the town militia—the *Garde nationale*—and constantly varied, lest familiarity favour a system of intrigues between the guards and the prisoners; in this way a considerable number of Parisians enjoyed their look at Louis. Michelet, that ardent apostle of the Revolution, tells us that his father was one of these sentries of the Temple, and that he came away much impressed by the artless good-nature and the ingenuity of Louis Seize. "The tyrant seems a simple, easy sort of fellow!" the Republican guards would say, a little mystified, as they watched the stout, hearty King give his little boy a lesson in geography or play a game of piquet to amuse his wife. No bitterness, no rancour showed in his demeanour and if he had occasion to speak to his jailers, it would be to ask them news of their family or to express in his natural way some simple sentiment or homely axiom which made them feel akin. . . . On the 11th of December (1792), when the King's trial began, he was kept all day in court without food or drink; his huge

Bourbon appetite, that nothing ever checked, tormented the poor prisoner; and, as he drove homewards to his dungeon of the Temple, seeing one of his escort munch a chunk of bread, he asked the man for a bit of it. Chaumette (he was Syndic of Paris) broke off a piece, of which Louis eagerly devoured the crust, and then held the crumb in his hand, not knowing what to do with it; Chaumette took it from him and threw it out of the window. The King looked surprised. "My grandmother [said Chaumette] used to say: Never throw away a crumb of bread; you couldn't make it grow!"

"Monsieur Chaumette [said the King], your grandmother was a woman of great sense. Bread is the gift of God."

And in this homely fashion the royal captive, already practically condemned to death, chatted with his Republican jailer on his way to his prison. . . . A number of little traits of this sort became diffused among the people, and one may say that never since his youth had the "*bon Roi*" been so popular as on the very eve of his execution.

There was no time to lose. The Jacobins hurried on the fatal hour and overbore the passionate opposition of the Girondins. Robespierre was evidently anxious. He rejected the idea of an appeal to the people: "For are not the virtuous always a minority?" Saint-Just went further still: "An appeal to the people [said he] might well be a revival of the monarchy." That which they had to do, they would do quickly.

On the 21st of January, 1793, Paris was declared in a state of siege. A great green close carriage, accompanied by a strong escort, led Louis XVI to the Place Louis XV—the present Place de la Concorde. There

stood the scaffold. The King mounted the steps, and then rushed forwards, meaning to address the people. The officer in command of the troops ordered the drums to beat. "The King then turned to us [wrote the executioner, Samson, who has left his recollections of this great event] and said: 'Gentlemen, I am innocent of that of which I am accused. May my blood cement the happiness of Frenchmen!" And he composed himself to death. I do not know if the Abbé Edgeworth really said then the fine phrase with which he is credited: "*Enfant de Saint-Louis, montez au ciel*," but it is certain that, in that last scene, the King, who had so constantly wished to prove himself a child of Henri Quatre, showed himself really and truly a son of St. Louis.

The death of the King rang the knell of the Gironde. The Girondins soon will be sent in droves to the scaffold; will be hunted from their hiding-places in the woods with bloodhounds, like runaway slaves; will know every form of misery and humiliation. The Royalist risings in the South and West will only add an excuse to the Reign of Terror. The triumph of the Jacobins appears complete. As a firm lover of France, I cannot bring myself to write the innumerable lists of their victims. "Liberty," said Madame Roland, "what crimes are committed in thy name!" Yet by their system of tyranny and sacrifice, by the way they centralized the energies of France, by their extermination of all possible resistance, and by the very terror they inspired, the Jacobins attained that which they attempted, which was to secure the future of their country; they left her great, really "one and indivisible," defended by fourteen armies comprising twelve hundred thousand men.

While they mobilized men and money in defence of the country, in the teeth of all Europe against them—with the Prussians in the Vosges; the Spaniards threatening Bayonne; the Prince of Coburg in front of Maubeuge; forty-five thousand Austrians and Italians in the Alps; fifty thousand Spaniards in the Pyrenees; more than a hundred thousand Austrians, Imperials, and English in Belgium and the lower Rhine; thirty-three thousand Austrians between the Meuse and the Moselle; a hundred and twelve thousand Germans on the Upper Rhine: with all these enemies and a federal insurrection in the South and West, these indomitable Terrorists still found time and liberty of mind to invent a new form of social order, which (when at last the triumph of the Republic should ensure eternal universal peace) might, they thought, confer on mankind the gifts of unity, fraternity, and happiness. This new organization was, in fact, their "Kultur."

Robespierre was their thinker, but their prophet was Saint-Just, a young man of four-and-twenty (in 1793), whose energy, passion, and genius—perhaps also his personal beauty and dark, solemn dignity—had brought him already to the very summit of affairs: the Committee of Public Safety. Nothing seemed simpler to Saint-Just than, by a sequence of decrees expressed with tragic eloquence and enforced by terror, to change the very spirit of a nation, the character of a race, the tendency of an age. Saint-Just, with his fixed, sombre gaze under his narrow forehead, saw, as he thought, in front of him, across a brief river of blood which he did not hesitate to ford, reach out, immense and splendid, the Golden Age, when nobody should be poor, when all men should live equal.

There should be no more rich: "Opulence [said he] is infamy."

"Let every citizen possess his daily bread, a roof over his head, a clean and comely wife, healthy, robust children; let him live in self-respecting independence."

"An organized democracy must furnish every citizen with that which he principally needs: work for the able, instruction for the child, assistance for the old and the infirm.

"Between private persons the difference in the scale of living should be trifling: a slight degree should separate the maximum and the minimum; much the same standard of comfort in every house: that of a well-to-do farmer or prosperous artisan.

"The children of all citizens between the ages of five and twelve shall be educated in common at the expense of the Republic."

"No Frenchman [said Robespierre] should possess, in unearned increment, more than three thousand francs [£120] a year."

"There must be neither rich nor poor."

"We intend [said Marat] that every man who owns less than a hundred thousand francs [£4000] shall be on our side and feel that his interest lies in maintaining the Republic. If the rich will not share and share alike in the benefits of the Revolution, they are not of our family. We confiscated the estates of the *émigrés* because they would not share with us the perils of the Revolution."

"Egoism is the mortal sin and private property is its aliment."

These last words, which are Saint-Just's, sum up the doctrine of the great Committee.

But these opinions could not please those wealthy cities of the South—those opulent and cultivated *bourgeois* who, barely four years before, had thrown themselves into the Revolution in order to secure a wider, an unlimited field for their own development and their personal ambition. Thousands of *bourgeois* of Marseilles, Bordeaux, Lyons (six thousand inhabitants were sacrificed at Lyons) were beheaded, drowned in the Rhine, or shot, in order to expiate the crime of rebellion against the dogmatism of Robespierre and the communism of Saint-Just. The Republic, in its narrow, fiery limits, could not include both Jacobins and Girondins: one or the other must perish. They were incompatible.

It was a death-struggle between the Commune and the Convention—the centripetal and the centrifugal forces—and the issue appeared uncertain when the treason of Dumouriez, who commanded the French armies on the Belgian frontier, gave a fatal blow to the prestige of the Girondins. It was almost a slur on their honour, for Dumouriez, on his last, his recent, visit to Paris had been the constant guest and confederate of the Girondins. Who was to take his place? La Fayette, who commanded the armies of the centre, on learning the execution of the King, had shaken the dust of his country from his feet and was just setting forth for America (seeking, like Alceste,

> un endroit écarté
> Où d'être homme d'honneur on ait la liberté),

when on the very frontier he had been seized by the enemy and was now a military prisoner at Olmutz. Custine (another aristocrat) who had been sent to the

North, had been beaten by the Prussians, recalled, beheaded (for such was the Jacobin way with a general not victorious) "*pour encourager les autres.*" Decidedly the Girondins had no luck at all with their generals, whose incapacity or treason compromised the existence of France. The situation was terrible. The English were in Toulon; the army on the Rhine was retreating before the victors of Mayence; the Dutch and the English were masters of Valenciennes; the army of the North was at the mercy of the Austrians. Lyons was in open revolt; La Vendé was at war with the Republic; two-thirds of the departments were threatening insurrection. Meanwhile, in the capital (for Celts will be Celts) the question was less "To be or not to be?" than "Which will carry the day, the Commune of Paris or the provincial Deputies?"

The Jacobins at least took the situation seriously. On learning the danger of France, they decreed a levy of three hundred thousand men, a measure which was carried out in the provinces in the midst of protest, agitation—sometimes insurrection and sometimes civil war; for, in that age of professional armies, the obligation of military service appeared the most murderous form of tyranny. When the farmers of the South and the West saw their lads driven from the land in order to fight for a Government who had cut off the head of the King, exiled the clergy, and who now, worse luck! threatened their own deputies —the members of their choice—they put their heads together and cogitated: "Well! Since fight they must, our sons shall fight for *us!*" and they joined the men of Lyons, the Cévennes La Vendée. Normandy too, displayed disquieting symptoms.

And in Paris the Jacobins inaugurated a Revolu-

tionary Tribunal which was to take a short way with traitors. As Robespierre explained: "The Tribunal will judge only one form of offence: High Treason; for which there is only one punishment, Death. It is therefore useless that time should be wasted in long deliberations." The Jacobins, the Commune, and the Mountain voted an enforced loan to be levied on the rich, repayable three years after the conclusion of peace. All these measures: requisition of men and money, Revolutionary Tribunal, even the Committee of Public Safety, were abominable in the eyes of the Gironde, who declared that France was about to witness "a worse tyranny than that of Venice." The Girondin members appealed to the provinces. They felt themselves in imminent danger, and with them the laws and liberties of France. And Marat, the soul of the Commune—Marat, a lunatic crank inflamed with fever and political passion (or, if you like it, as the Jacobins put it, "*Marat, ce philosophe formé par la méditation et le malheur*")—Marat declared, with his great, blazing sunken eyes glowering at the Girondins: "We must cut off a hundred thousand heads in order to save four-and-twenty millions of men."

The Girondins had appealed to the departments. Against them Robespierre, that apostle of Unity, pronounced the word that was to ruin them without reprieve: *Federalism*. . . . Robespierre did not thunder like Danton, or scream like Marat. But his clear, shrill voice enunciated calmly syllables that the ears of his listeners retained for ever. And it must be owned that, in this as in other things, Robespierre had a strange prevision of the future; as a thinker at least, as a seer, he made few mistakes. On the eve of the nineteenth century that was to fight such

glorious fights for the unity of North America, the Unity of Italy, the Unity of Germany, the Unity of the Slavs, Robespierre saw, sixty years before the rest of us, the superannuated futility of the Girondins' federal ideal. He foresaw that, as he foresaw our terrible modern conception of the art and state of war. And he was equally ready to die for his dream or to drown in blood those that opposed it.

No wonder the Girondins felt their blood run cold —or rather felt it run hotter than blood should run —for they were men of the fiery South. And the fieriest of them all, unhappily, was President of the Convention. He was, again unfortunately (since Aquitaine mixes a sober dose of reason in its heady wine), no lawyer from Bordeaux, like most of the Girondins, but a clever declamatory perfumer from Grasse, in Provence. On the 27th of May (1793) this man, Isnard, as President of the Convention, was required to receive a deputation from the Commune. And, at the sight of his enemy, his eloquence stole away his wits, and he declared:

"Listen while I tell you! If ever, in an odious desecration, Paris should lay hands on the Deputies of the Nation, I declare to you, in the name of France, Paris shall disappear from the face of the earth, and men shall seek in vain on which bank of the Seine Paris once used to exist."

Robespierre and Marat had now their excuse. It was sacrilege in the eyes of the Commune to speak ill of Paris, "the Capital of Liberty." Henceforth Isnard and all his comrades were hostages for the provinces. Robespierre washed his hands of them and their fate, saying, in his plaintive way, at the Society of Jacobins: "It is not for me to say how

the people are to save the Republic. What is one man? It is not for me to indicate the necessary measures. I am ill. I am consumed by a slow fever, and especially by the fever of patriotism. I have said my say." The leader, with a sigh, sank into his seat. And the people of Paris, feeling the reins loose on their neck, rose in an obedient riot, invaded the Convention, armed with pikes and rifles, and, affirming their right to insurrection in their capacity of a Sovereign People, demanded the proscription of two-and-twenty deputies. It is not easy to say why they fixed on this particular figure. There were in the Assembly a great many more than two-and-twenty Girondins: M. Auland estimates their number at one hundred and sixty-five. But those twenty-two were a sort of General Staff. And besides, in one of those baseless libels disseminated by the party newspapers which were at the origin of most of the excesses of Paris, had it not been written that the Gironde had supplied Dumouriez with a list of two-and-twenty Jacobins whose heads were to fall the day when his armies should conquer the capital?

The two-and-twenty escaped with their lives, banished from the Convention, banished from the capital. Some of them proceeded to Rouen. It was a favourite idea of theirs, as it had been of the Kings, that the National Assembly of Deputies ought not to be exposed to the fret and fever of an excitable metropolis. The monarchy had governed from the stately quiet of Versailles. The Americans were even then founding a Parliamentary city (named after General Washington) in the very centre of their States. And the Girondins had thought of Bourges, because it is situated in the centre of France. But the evident sympathies of the

Normans for their cause had drawn them to Rouen, where they held a sort of informal congress to expound their views. And there they moved the patriotism and the passion of a young girl of noble instincts to such a fervour of pity and indignation that, keeping her own counsel, she left the city, and took the coach for Paris. . . . She was the great-granddaughter of Pierre Corneille, the tragic poet; a tragic solution came naturally to the mind of Charlotte Corday d'Armont. . . . We all know how she bought a knife under the arcades of the Palais Royal, how she called at Marat's house, forced her way into his presence, and stabbed him in his bath. That was on the 13th of July; four days later she paid her debt under the sliding axe of the guillotine, happy, because she thought that she had rid her country of a tyrant. Alas! she had only sent her friends, the Girondins, to the scaffold.

The murder of Marat had maddened Paris, for Marat was the idol of the people. "*Cœur de Jésus! Cœur de Marat!*" prayed the Jacobins, and his bust was set on many a patriotic altar. We see the saints we adore through a magic prism which makes them resemble an image in our heart. It is difficult for us to comprehend the cultus of Paris for this pretentious and bloodthirsty lunatic; but to the men of the Terror Marat appeared all pity, all power, all certitude of salvation; and in their ignorance they took the hare-brained doctor for a man of science: "*Marat, ce philosophe formé par la méditation et le malheur.*"

The murder of a god exacts a bloody sacrifice. The Girondin deputies were tracked like wild beasts, imprisoned, beheaded. On the 3rd of October twelve of them were guillotined in Paris. At the other end

of France, in their own Bordeaux, another half-dozen were guillotined. Some tried to escape; the corpse of Pétion was found in the fields half eaten by the dogs. Condorcet committed suicide. Almost all the personages mentioned in this narrative will come to the same violent end: the Queen, beheaded on the 15th of October; Madame Elisabeth a few months later; Chaumette, the Syndic-Procureur of Paris, after his royal prisoner; Barnave, regretting only (as he wrote to one of his sisters) the pleasures of friendship "*et la culture de l'esprit, dont l'habitude a souvent rempli mes journées d'une manière délicieuse*"; and later (as the tragic whirligig went round, bringing new men up, sending others down) Danton, the giant of the Revolution sacrificed by Robespierre; then Robespierre himself; Saint-Just. . . .

Two thousand five hundred persons were executed in Paris during the Terror, five thousand drowned in the Loire at Nantes; at Lyons the "suspects" were shot down in troops.

"A sad fatality [said Camille Desmoulins, one December evening at the Society of Jacobins]—an unhappy fatality wills that, out of sixty persons who witnessed my marriage contract, only two remain: Robespierre and Danton; all the rest are guillotined or have emigrated." Imprudent Camille! Such reflections are not esteemed "civic." Thy gifted featherhead will soon fall in the basket—soon to be joined by Robespierre's and Danton's.

When, in its first glow of dawn, the Republic had gladdened the world, its prophets had considered their new government in the light of a religion: the Republic was the successor of superannuated Christian-

ity. The years should no longer be counted from the birth of Jesus Christ, but from the proclamation of the Republic; in the new year there were twelve months with, in each, three weeks, or decades, of ten days, with a sort of leap-year surplus for Republican festivals. The year began, with the era, on the 22nd of September, 1792 (the day of the autumnal equinox), and the months ran in their courses: Vendémiaire, the vintage month; Brumaire, the month of mists; Frimaire, of freezing; Nivôse, the snow month; Pluviôse, the time of rains; Ventôse, the windy season; Germinal, when plants begin to germinate; Floréal, the month of flowers; Prairial, the time of hay-fields; Messidor, the harvest-moon; Thermidor, the hot season; Fructidor, the season of fruits.

Of all these lovely names, only two are still frequent on our lips. We still speak of Thermidor and of Brumaire, because of the great political events with which they are associated.

A nation cannot lose, by Act of Parliament, the mental habit of many centuries. In France, in any difficulty, Frenchmen naturally turned towards the King. In 1793, when all Europe fell on France, while in her own boundaries there raged a war of secession, even the Republicans looked instinctively for some strong man—some *Anax andrôn*—to appear and deliver. The Girondins had called Marat before the bar of his peers because he had cried that France needed a chief, "a military Tribune." In August, 1793, in the Society of Jacobins, another orator arose and announced the advent of a Messiah, "*le grand homme qui doit paraître, qui sauvera son pays et donnera la paix en assurant le bonheur du monde.*" At that mo-

ment, sick of anarchy, the eyes of France turned towards Robespierre; that spick-and-span, elegant, slim, and gentle figure appeared, no less than the wild, filthy, raving Marat, the expected Angel of Deliverance: so deep was the need of a saviour. But Robespierre was incapable of impulse or daring. In opposition to most historians, I believe that Robespierre was perfectly sincere and perfectly well-intentioned; but, rapt in his vision and his system, his imagination lacked the human touch that made a Danton, for instance, passionately aware of the horror of his crimes. Robespierre saw the world as a tissue of numbers, and maxims, and systems; of all the blood he shed, no warm drop splashed up in his eyes or stained his heart. . . . Was this unpleasant operation necessary for the infinite advantage of Humanity? He thought it was, and esteemed himself an apostle and a benefactor. While Danton, disgusted with his own bloodguiltiness, exclaimed: "*J'aime mieux être guillotiné que guillotineur!*" Robespierre, gazing into the future, smiled ecstatically, and murmured: "*Encore quelques serpents à écraser!*"

Those last serpents crushed, he felt the Millennium at hand.

The odd thing is that Robespierre should have been popular, as he certainly was. More than once between the summer of '93 and the summer of '94, Paris threw herself at his feet and would fain have thrown herself into his arms.

Robespierre was apparently shocked; he considered these advances as an improper proposal. The only use he made of his power was to exterminate heresy, and that with such ruthless vigour that at last the very city that had adored him felt her gorge rise at the sight of those clear green eyes, at the sound of

that clear keen voice, always demanding blood, more blood—turned from him with loathing and sent him to join the thousands he had slaughtered.

On the 9th of Thermidor in the year Two—on the 27th of July, 1794—the Reign of Terror came to a sudden end. Robespierre, Saint-Just, and their companions were sent to the guillotine by an unexpected revolt and *coup d'état* of their confederates.

And on the morrow—on the morning of the 10th of Thermidor—when the Deputies of the Convention left the Tuileries they were hailed with the shouts of a crowd delirious with joy. Women threw roses at them as they passed; young men seized the skirts of their coats and lifted them to their impassioned lips. The men of the moment (new names: Tallien, Fréron, Barras) looked at each other in surprise. They had guillotined their old accomplice, Robespierre, as a matter of political necessity, and doubtless had intended to continue an excellent method for securing a majority. But, being neither men of genius like Danton, men of character like Saint-Just, nor men of absolute and reasoned conviction like Robespierre, but just opportunists and men of politics, they grasped the situation in a twinkling. So mercy was to be the order of the day? They welcomed an idea which decided that Robespierre's avengers could not anew pretend to place and power. Henceforth the Jacobins were fallen from grace. . . .

And a certain Thibaudeau writes in his *Memoirs:*

"*On semblait sortir du tombeau et renaître á la vie.*"

SOURCES CONSULTED:

Same as preceding chapter, especially Aulard, *Jacobins;* Madelin, *Révolution;* Taine, *Révolution,* t. iii.; Michelet, *Révolution,* t. v. et vi.

LAMARTINE: *Histoire des Girondins*.
ÉMILE DARD: *Le Général Choderlos de Laclos*.
ALBERT MATHIEZ: "La Mobilisation en l'an II" (*Revue de Paris*, 1 avril, 1917).
ANATOLE FRANCE: *Les Dieux ont soif*.

CHAPTER II

THE COMING OF BONAPARTE

A YEAR after the reaction of Thermidor, the Republic was again on the eve of civil war. The fall of Robespierre had removed that soul of tense Republican energy which had created armies, organized victory, and governed a country in circumstances of unparalleled distress; and now, in a relaxing of every fibre, a general indifference, an indolence, a longing for pleasure and luxury and wealth, seemed suddenly to invade the strenuous nation, to set it smiling and trifling and dreaming, with its enemy still in the gate. A new class had arisen—speculators and stockjobbers, estate-agents, contractors, especially army contractors—enriched with the spoils of the Revolution and much inclined to think, after the manner of a certain Pope, that, since God had seen fit to give them the Republic, they would enjoy it.

France had disarmed three of her foes and had enlarged her borders. In 1795 the Peace of Bâle made Spain her ally, while Prussia yielded her the left bank of the Rhine. Peace with Holland followed. In three years France had added to her territory nine new departments, had gained the Rhine and Belgium, had filled out her natural limits. Those three years had done more than the three preceding centuries.

In blaming the crimes of the Convention, let us remember its benefits: the Romans of old forgave much to the conqueror who enlarged the circuit of the city. The Republic had expanded the "pomœrium" of France.

Within doors, too, the Convention had not been idle, had elaborated a scheme of popular education, had founded most of the great public colleges that exist to-day: École Normale, Polytechnique, Saint-Cyr, Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers. At once beneficent and criminal, the Convention had let no sacrifice and no scruple divert it from its task. But it had ruled with an absolute power, a rod of iron. . . . And tyranny, whether it be of a King or a Convention, soon exhausts the gratitude of those who benefit by its exactions.

So now the heroic and terrible Convention, come to its natural term of three years, was expiring amid the impatience of a public eager to be rid of it, a public in love with mediocrity. But the Convention could not accept its end. Chiefly from love of power, but partly no doubt from patriotism, it clung to office. Remembering the disorganization which had followed its own election, when no single deputy had any experience of affairs, the Convention issued a decree: Two thirds of the members of the new Legislative Assembly were to be chosen from its body. The Royalists and Girondins greeted this audacious fiat with shouts of rage: "Down with the assassins! Death to the Commune! Down with the Terror!" while the democratic "Sections" of the city openly threatened a counter-revolution and spoke of the right of the Sovereign People to change the form of its Government, at its own sweet will, as often as it pleased.

The Convention, which had sent Louis XVI to the scaffold, which had beheaded Marie-Antoinette, which had exterminated the Girondins and sacrificed its own leaders,—Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just,—was now in its turn menaced with the customary fate of tyrants. But the Terrorists of yesterday were men of resolution. They meant to die hard and fight in self-defence. Aware that Paris intended to attack them at their next meeting, the Convention prepared itself to stand a siege. Barras, one of the leaders, remembered a young, small, sombre Corsican officer who had brilliantly recovered Toulon from the English. He sent for this young General Buona-Parté (for thus they wrote his name), and so Napoleon enters our field of vision.

He was twenty-six years of age, ignorant, original, full of projects and ideas—what the Germans call a world-mender, a *Welt-Verbesserer*. "Nothing ever astonished me so much as to see M. Bonaparte win battle after battle [said a French officer of the old school to Stendhal in Berlin]. He talked so much. I expected nothing from a man so full of interminable discussions; he wished to reform everything in the State." Except in military tactics, the practice of artillery, mathematics, Rousseau's theories and Plutarch's *Lives*, Napoleon, though a great reader, was no scholar; he had little Latin and less Greek; he was singularly ill instructed even in the recent discoveries of science. But he was a logical dreamer, and (as I have said more than once) that is the sort which does great things in France.

He talked, when occasion occurred to expatiate on his special hobby, but he was capable of infinite silence and self-absorption. He talked, but he had no small

talk. And even when eloquent he often looked silent, his gaze was so sombre and so fixed. This profound inward glance struck every observer who has left us his impression of the young Napoleon. But for its beauty he would have seemed but an ugly little man, so meagre, so painfully wasted, so sallow, with a great shock of unkempt brown hair hanging in untidy "spaniel's ears" over his cheeks and down below his chin, "altogether too much hair [said a lady who liked him to Stendhal] for so much eyes." And yet, to an artist's thinking, those wasted, drawn features—those great grey eyes so deeply sunk under the frontal arch—held the promise of classic beauty, especially the chiselled mouth.

"There was little of the soldier about him [said Stendhal's informant], nothing military, martial, loud, or dashing. He looked desperately poor, but then he was paid in paper money! I think we might have read even then in the contour of his exquisite lips that he despised danger and that danger never made him lose his self-command."

(This lady may have been Laure Permon, Duchesse d'Abrantès, the portrait is so like her description of the Napoleon she knew from his youth up; or was she Madame Victorine de Chastenay?)

Her account corroborates Hyde de Neuville's, who, a few years later, noticed Bonaparte as a shabby, untidy little man, something like a clerk or an usher —"*petit, maigre, les cheveux collés sur les tempes, un air de négligence extrême*," utterly insignificant until he transfixed you with that piercing, investigating, penetrating gaze no man ever forgot.

A recent controversy (in *The Times*) has discussed the question of Napoleon's height. He seems to have

been just over five feet six inches in stature—counting English inches: the old French "*pied*" and "*pouce*" are not the same. Five foot six is not very small for a Southerner, and yet Napoleon is always spoken of as a little man. But he was ill-proportioned; the bust too long for his legs; and even in youth he stooped and poked his head. He was then as much too spare as in later life he became too corpulent for his height. We remember how little Laure Permon, when first she saw him in uniform, laughed at his scraggy shanks emerging from the wide tops of his immense Hessians, and how her sister dubbed the young Lieutenant "Puss-in-Boots."

"*Dans sa jeunesse* [she says elsewhere] *Napoléon était laid.*" His sallow skin, yellow, almost grey, and his drawn thin features made this ugliness. As he grew stouter and stronger the complexion warmed to a pleasant ivory, agreeable to the sight, although to a practised eye its utter colourlessness might have foretold that malady of the digestion which had killed his father, and which will leave our hero barely another five-and-twenty years into which to crowd his ample destiny. A nervous jerk of the right shoulder, frequent in moments of excitement or emotion, as well as something emaciated, fatal, avid, sombre, in the whole aspect of the man, made him seem marked out for a tragic, not for a glorious, destiny. His appearance foreshadowed St. Helena—not the Empire.

Such was the man whom Barras summoned to rescue the Deputies of France. At this period, young Bonaparte was still a Jacobin. The younger Robespierre had been his friend; he had admired Maximilien. It is probable that in his heart of hearts he sympathized with the "Sections"—a sort of Town Councils—of

Paris rather than with these too prehensile Deputies. Still they represented authority. And they had sent for him: it was his chance, that Opportunity which a prompt genius seizes by the forelock. He considered a moment and said that he must have cannon: where was there a battery?

There was one, he was told, just outside Paris, at the Park of Sablons, but it was thought that the local militia of the Sections was already in possession. "We must have it!" remarked our young man, mused a moment, and dispatched a friend of his in the cavalry—a young daredevil called Murat—full speed to Sablons at the head of a company of Chasseurs. Murat routed the *bourgeois* of the *Garde nationale*, and brought forty cannon back to Paris, which Bonaparte installed all round the Tuileries. That expedition was to bring them each a crown.

On the morrow, 13th Vendémiaire, in the year Three (5th of October, 1795), forty thousand *Gardes nationaux* attacked the Tuileries. In those days there was no rue de Rivoli; few streets and very narrow led from the rue Saint-Honoré to the palace and the gardens. In one of these narrow passages Bonaparte established a battery that swept the steps of Saint-Roch: the front of that church still shows the scars of the bullets that stopped the rush of the Sections in that direction; another battery commanded the rue de Richelieu; a third the bridge and the quays of the south bank. By nightfall the insurrection was suppressed. And a few days later the grateful Convention appointed the little Corsican to be General-in-Chief commanding the Armies of the Interior—that is to say, all those not engaged in the invasion of Europe. "Such a position [says Napoleon in his

Memoirs] is not suitable to a General of twenty-five." Before the ensuing spring was in full flower the Government granted the desire of his heart; in March, 1796, he was sent to command the armies in Italy. The bridegroom five days old of a beautiful woman whom he passionately adored, he left Paris, his eyes blind with tears, but his heart all on fire with the lust of conquest.

Prussia and Holland had laid down their arms and had yielded their claims to the left bank of the Rhine. But Austria—the Empire (the ally of yesterday, and now the enemy of France)—was obstinate in maintaining her sovereignty. The struggle of France with Austria had filled the history of centuries. The alliance had been a trifle of less than forty years; it had never been popular; it had never seemed natural; and when the Gironde had declared war on Austria in 1792, the opening of hostilities had been greeted with national enthusiasm. Now after four years of battles, Austria (and England) still held out. The Republic sent one army to invade the Empire. Another, under Bonaparte, was dispatched across the Alps. England must wait her turn.

It was classic to attack the Empire in Italy; over and over again we have seen the French armies take that road, invade Lombardy, but now the aim, at least, was different, more precise.

The French Revolution was nourished on Roman History. It was Danton who first—reviving that old dream of Richelieu's—had answered the invasion of France by a coalition of kings with the assertion of his country's right to her "natural frontiers," that is to say, the limits of Gaul: the sea, the ocean, the Pyrenees, the Alps, and the Rhine. In 1792, the Execu-

tive Council had assigned the Rhine as the boundary of the Republic. And now these "natural frontiers" were a word to conjure with; no Frenchman would have less. Belgium, Savoy, Alsace, were necessaries of life! And Bonaparte remembered Cisalpine Gaul: he would not only vanquish Austria, but create an allied Republic in Lombardy to protect Savoy. Another in Holland would ensure the safety of Belgium. The great idea of Bonaparte (which he had received from the men of the Mountain) was to recover for the Republic "*l'héritage des Gaulois*"—the full inheritance of Gaul. The wonderful thing is that he did it in a few weeks.

Who can read without emotion the series of his bulletins from Lombardy?

The campaign in Italy began on the 10th of April, 1796. Napoleon proclaims from the summit of the Alps:

"SOLDIERS!—

"You are naked, half-starved. The Government owes you much and can give you nothing. Your patience, your courage in the midst of these rocks are splendid, but will get you no glory. I will lead you into the most fertile plains in the world! Rich provinces, great cities, shall fall into your hands. Soldiers of Italy, do you lack the courage or the constancy to conquer them? . . ."

Another bulletin is dated the 26th:

"Soldiers, in fifteen days you have gained half a dozen victories! You have taken one-and-twenty flags, fifty-five cannon, and several fortresses. You have conquered the richest territory in Piedmont,

made fifteen thousand prisoners; you have killed or wounded ten thousand of the enemy. . . . But, soldiers, you have done nothing, since you have still so much to do. As yet we possess neither Milan nor Turin! . . ."

Three weeks later he writes to Carnot:

"The battle of Lodi gives Lombardy to the Republic. You may consider me at Milan."

One more move on his marvellous chessboard and there he was. The next dispatch is dated: "From our General Headquarters at Milan, 5 Prairial, an 4" (24th of May, 1796).

In those incoherent reminiscences and notes which Stendhal chose to entitle the *Life of Napoleon*, we find a living picture of the French occupation of Milan. Youth, glory, hope, joy, enthusiasm, beauty, compose its colours. General Bonaparte was twenty-six, and "he was one of the oldest of us," says Stendhal. Never was an army so young or so gay, never was an army so ragged or so poor, so enchanted with a pair of new boots or a suit of clean linen, when the wealth of Lombardy began to roll into those empty pockets. The General had sent for his bride and his sisters, who reigned at Montebello and at the Palazzo Serbelloni; but his young officers were dazzled by the high combs, the lace mantillas, the dark eyes, the mysterious, insinuating smile of the ladies of Lombardy, who, in hatred of the Austrians, received their invaders with open arms. Those were days of love and war. At the entry of the French into Milan, the whole populace shouted one immense "*Evviva!*"; all the lovely Lombard ladies were on their balconies, showering roses and kisses. Beyond the Spanish ramparts

of the city, the plain in its fresh green stretched out for leagues, so covered with trees it appeared a forest, and, in the distance, the chain of the Alps, glittering with snow, from Monte Viso to Monte Rosa, reared their sparkling summits in the hot, blue sky. Rising out of the gardens near at hand, the lacy whiteness of the cathedral's marble dome appeared a reflection of that Alpine splendour.

That spring of 1796 was the romance of the Revolution. The Hour and the Man had met. Marat's "military tribune," the "*grand homme*" whom the Jacobins had prophesied, whose advent should bring "*le bonheur au monde*," had appeared on the scene. Bonaparte occupied the horizons of Europe. The Republic of Lombardy soared into freedom and happiness without a struggle. Everywhere the Austrians were put to flight. The campaign of Rivoli lasted just four days. On the evening that followed the victory one of the French generals, faint with fatigue, came up to Bonaparte; Napoleon pointed to a great heap of Austrian flags which were being brought in from every quarter and flung down at his feet—

"Make your bed there, Lasalle [he said], and rest. You have earned it."

And the tired hero slept on his bed of trophies.

But Bonaparte seemed never to rest from victory.

Meanwhile, in France another new Constitution had changed in some respects the form of Government: there was a Chamber, called the Five Hundred; there was a Senate, the *Conseil des Anciens*; and a supreme board of Five Pentarchs united in a Directory. Such was the body of the last revolutionary Constitution; it had no soul.

While the armies breathed youth, joy, and heroism,

the civil State seemed in a condition of collapse. General indifference attended its transactions. The taxes brought in nothing to the empty treasury. The *assignats* had reached their lowest depth. If we open some old account-book of the period the prices fill us with amazement: bread is sixty francs a pound; white beans, fourteen hundred francs the bushel—in paper money, of course; any other sort is scarce and most remunerative to its possessor: the louis d'or of four-and-twenty francs is worth twelve thousand francs in *assignats!* Such was the condition of France after eight years of Revolution when Bonaparte began to send his millions of Italian gold to Paris: war indemnities squeezed from Parma and Piacenza; English booty snatched from the harbour of Leghorn; pictures and provinces wrung from the Pope. After Mantua he sent thirty millions (of francs) in gold to the Minister of Finance in Paris "*pour le soulagement du trésor public*," enriched the museums of the capital with more than three hundred masterpieces "which it has taken thirty centuries to produce," flew the French colours on the borders of the Adriatic, established two Republics, filials of France, across the Alps, and brought into the French alliance Parma, Sardinia, Naples, and the Pope! The Treaty of Campo-Formio (1797) showed Austria vanquished, and flattered the passionate opposition of the French to the hated nation. For the France of the Revolution (which in more things than one returned to the traditions of Louis XIV) believed that France could never be free while Austria was prosperous.

At Campo-Formio, Austria, sorely against her will, accepted the new doctrine of the "natural frontiers" the left bank of the Rhine and Belgium (which the

victorious armies of the Republic held in their possession)—and acknowledged the Republic of Lombardy. But Bonaparte had to grant the Emperor something in exchange: I think that which he sacrificed was his honour. He offered up unoffending Venice. He took what lay readiest to his hand without thought of right or wrong. Here we catch the first peep of the "Corsican ogre" familiar to our fathers; of that Napoleon who in 1799 will massacre twelve hundred Turkish prisoners at Jaffa, though they surrendered to his parole, because he has no means of feeding or guarding them; who, in 1804, will assassinate the Duke of Enghien; who during the terrible stampede of the retreat from Russia will abandon his wounded; the Napoleon who frankly owned one day to Josephine: "*Les lois de morale et de convenance ne peuvent être faîtes pour moi.*" On this occasion he quietly wrote to the Directory: "*Venise paiera le Rhin*"; and all parties (except Venice) appeared satisfied with the transaction.

Bonaparte reigned in Italy. When he returned to France, covered with laurels, followed by the train of his spoils and conquests, it was evident that the victorious General, although no member of the Government, was the only popular potentate in France. The Directory, whose existence he had assured, whose means of livelihood he had supplied, looked askance at this too brilliant benefactor. But Bonaparte did not yet wish to reign; the pear was not yet ripe. England had not made peace.

Just as Napoleon had made war on Austria in Italy, he determined to engage England in Egypt, prior to invading India. It is true that Egypt at that date belonged, not to perfidious Albion but to Turkey,

with whom France was no longer at war; but that was a detail. If the campaign in Italy had been the romance of the Revolution, the invasion of Egypt was its mystery, its aureole, its great adventure. Bonaparte set out for Alexandria attended not only by a brilliant cohort of generals and 38,000 seasoned troops, but by the first mathematicians, geologists, chemists, and antiquaries of France; one of them, Champollion, discovered the key to the hieroglyphics of that elder world. "For the first time since the Roman Empire [writes Napoleon] a civilized nation, cultivating the arts and sciences, was about to visit, measure, and explore the superb ruins which, for centuries, have dazzled the curiosity of science." And he enumerates his aeronauts, his poets, his astronomers, and architects, "*capables de créer les arts de la France au milieu des déserts de l'Arabie.*" But when the soldiers of Bonaparte found themselves lost in those sterile wastes of sands, with unfriendly Arabs, "*si laids, si féroces,*" and their women, "*plus sales encore,*" for sole inhabitants, loud were their lamentations for the lovely plains of Lombardy! The army was struck by a vague melancholy which nothing could overcome. Because, at every trace of antiquity, the battalions halted while the men of science measured, copied, dug, compared notes, the disgusted soldiers supposed that for this alone had they been called away from a fairer conquest, and in their chagrin they dubbed the asses of the transport "men of science." But the day came when, about five leagues from Cairo, they saw three vast rocks rise on the flat horizon of the desert and were told they had been raised by human hands. Though these were by far the most imposing monuments of the ancients that

the troops had yet encountered, the architects and statuaries kept in the rear and left the direction of affairs to the military officers. The soldiers were told to prepare for battle. And their next move was the victory of the Pyramids.

And now what wonderful names blaze like comets in the bulletins of Bonaparte: Alexandria, Jaffa, Nazareth! But while the soldiers on land went on from strength to strength, the English at Aboukir destroyed all the transport ships of the French, so that the victorious army was a prisoner in Egypt. The siege of Saint-Jean-d'Acre was long and terrible, but even this repulse could be disguised as a triumph. The difficulties overcome, the dangers endured, the glory gathered, the rapidity of conquests which adorned the annals of France with the most splendid names of antiquity, all combined to increase the already dazzling reputation of a General barely thirty. While in France, on all the frontiers, the Government blundered into ruin through defeat, the public said to its soul: "Patience: . . . When Bonaparte comes home."

Sydney Smith, the English Admiral cruising off the coasts of Egypt, was a man endowed with the wisdom of the serpent. He arranged that a budget of newspapers, full of all the disasters and defeats of the Directory, should run the blockade and pass into the hands of General Bonaparte; in fact, with a perfidious courtesy, he gave them to a French officer come on board to parley concerning an exchange of prisoners. Bonaparte had been for three months deprived of news from home: when he saw the state of affairs in France, he determined to return at all risks. Rapidly and secretly he prepared his flight. A missive, delivered only after his departure, entrusted the army to

General Kléber. There were two Venetian frigates in the port of Alexandria; Bonaparte, with several of his generals and two of the inseparable mathematicians, went on board and, after an adventurous voyage of six weeks, escaped the enemy scouring the seas in quest of all French vessels, and landed off the coast of Provence, near Fréjus, on the 17th Vendémiaire of the year Eight. Two days later the Directory at Paris received the news. It spread like wildfire. One name was on every lip: Bonaparte! Bonaparte! Bonaparte!

Bonaparte had returned from Egypt to seize the reins of power. He meant to suppress the garrulous imbeciles of the Directory; but the country was still Republican; he could not declare himself King. He was too young to be a Director, had he aspired to a fraction of authority. And, in 1799, the form, the superstition, of a plurality of rulers appeared the very sign and symbol of a democratic government. Bonaparte did not profit immediately by the wild enthusiasm that greeted his return; he lay low; frequented the sessions of the Institute; affected the character of the archæologist—the pensive and travelled antiquary. Meanwhile, he studied the public. The great majority of Frenchmen were weary of the Revolution's perpetual misrule, and yet, as I have said, remained attached to its benefits. There was little desire for the King to come to his own again. The situation of the poor, especially in country places, was on the whole immensely improved. We have it on the testimony of the Duke of Larochefoucauld-Liancourt (among others), a witness the more disinterested that he was a man whom the Revolution had ruined; in his letters to his friend, Arthur Young, he notes the social changes brought about by the new

state of things. Large estates have given place to very small ones, which yield at least one fourth more harvest and produce than the old. Agriculture is everywhere more intelligent. The homes of the peasants are improved, more spacious and cleaner. The labourers themselves are less ignorant than their fathers: "*Ils sont plus qu'eux en état de réfléchir, de combiner, un peu moins éloignés de toute innovation.*"

The sale of the Church-lands and of the estates confiscated from the *émigrés* had enriched a world of thrifty peasants who dreaded any change in the government lest they should be ordered to disgorge. The love of property and not the love of liberty riveted them to the Revolution. It seems a paradox to say that the French are no great lovers of Liberty. But they are enthusiasts for Equality. Justice and not Freedom is really their national idol. The whole country would have risen in revolt rather than permit the re-establishment of the Three Orders and the privileges of the aristocracy.

They were ready to obey a master, should he be just, should he maintain equality among his subordinates, and confirm their possession of the fields and farms they had bought so cheap with their *assignats*. Bonaparte saw his way clear. The most absolute of mortals prepared to consolidate a great democracy.

He knew that he had a party in the State: the army, at least the younger generals, the Senate, all that stood for authority and discipline; all that dreaded a threatening revival of the Reign of Terror. And, in fact, only the Terror or a Cæsar could have saved France at that juncture. But the Chamber—the *Cinq-cents*—was against a Dictator, was, for the greater part, violently Jacobin. Appearances must

be preserved. It was not as yet a question of mounting a horse, heading a charge, and issuing a *pronunciamiento*. At last the plan was evolved: the Senate suddenly informed the nation of a vast conspiracy against the Republic; the two Chambers were transferred to Saint-Cloud, a few miles outside Paris, to deliberate in peaceful seclusion; and Bonaparte was named General-in-Chief, protecting the menaced legislators in the suburbs with a girdle of regiments and cannon. Three of the five Directors resigned—more or less spontaneously. The *Cinq-cents* and the Ancients were requested to decide on a reform of the government. The day was fixed: the 9th of November, 1799; but History knows the date as the *Dix-huit Brumaire*.

It was fine. All Paris—at least, all political Paris—set out for Saint-Cloud. One might have supposed that, in the course of the last ten years, the Parisians had been surfeited with changes in the Constitution, but, in that case too, it seems that appetite grows by what it feeds on. The palace and the gardens were crammed. On the first floor the Senate was assembled; on a raised ground-floor, in the Orangery, the Five Hundred held council, draped in their red robes of office. Everyone guessed that something momentous was about to happen; no one, not even Bonaparte, knew exactly what was in the air.

The General's brother, Lucien Bonaparte, was President of the *Cinq-cents*. But, as time dragged on and nothing happened, Napoleon, always of a nervous temperament, chafed at the suspense and felt he must act himself. Suddenly he entered the Orangery. He was greeted by a storm of abuse. Red sleeves flapped and struck him, half-stifled him, for he was

small; one giant of a deputy nearly knocked him down. And violent voices shrieked: "Down with the Tyrant! Down with the Dictator!" For one long moment he must have thought that all was lost.

The grenadiers rushed in to save their General, and carried him off while, still in angry tumult, the Jacobins shouted: "Outlaw him! Outlaw him! *Hors la loi!*" But the day was not yet done! "Soldiers, can I count on you?" cried Bonaparte. Despite their cries of affirmation, neither master nor men knew, at this juncture, what to do next. There was a long moment of hesitation. And then Lucien Bonaparte appeared.

He was, as I have said, the President of the Five Hundred, and seemed to incarnate the Assembly. By this time General Bonaparte was on horseback; in a twinkling his brother was mounted and riding at his side: "Soldiers [said Lucien], the President of the Council of the Five Hundred assures you that the great majority of the Council is tyrannized and terrorized by a handful of dangerous assassins. . . . Will you deliver the representatives of France? . . . Those brigands in the Orangery are not the deputies of the nation, but the deputies of the dagger!" On this occasion it must be owned that the younger of the Corsican brothers was the more eloquent; he gave the army what it wanted: an excuse for its intervention. The drums beat; a column was formed in a tumult of cries. As if by magic, the daredevil Murat appeared and marched them up the shallow stairs leading to the Orangery. "Down with the Jacobins! Down with '93!" The spirit of Thermidor was in the air.

In the Orangery the beat of the drums had struck

a sudden terror. The door opened; Murat entered in a crowd of soldiers, with fixed bayonets. This apparition had a very different effect from that of the solitary Bonaparte. In one instant the windows were open (they were but a few feet above the soft earth of the flower-beds underneath) and the red togas were lost to view in the gloom of a November twilight; tags and tatters of them were found on the morrow clinging to the thickets of the forest of Saint-Cloud, and even in the woods of Meudon. The people of Paris only laughed and said: "The Deputies have added another to the famous cascades of Saint-Cloud."

And on the very morrow a new government was formed and the long reign of the Jacobins was brought to an end. There were no longer five Directors but three Consuls. The First Consul, during the ten years of his office, was to rule the State; he named the ministers, controlled the administration, and called the policy. And the First Consul, of course, was Bonaparte. His colleagues were neither rivals of his power nor critics of his policy; but they were very useful underlings, men of capacity and experience, well chosen (for he chose them himself) to support and enlighten a man of genius in a strange position; they were Napoleon's books of reference—indispensable, humble auxiliaries.

Bonaparte was now the master of France. Too proud to owe his elevation to a November night's dream, he determined to make broad the basis of his power: he referred his new Constitution to the nation. The people were asked to vote in approbation or repudiation of the new régime. Three millions answered: Yes! There were only fifteen hundred Nays. We hear of no revolt against the violent establishment

of the new government. The Republic had entered into being with the thunderclap of a *coup d'état*, and it was an axiom of the Revolution that only by such means could the State, in its distress, be saved. The right of insurrection, the direct appeal to popular force, was, in the eyes of Bonaparte's contemporaries, the supreme safeguard against tyranny, or mismanagement, or corruption. In such circumstances, the nation not only excused but required a *coup d'état* —or, as they said, a *journée*, a day's work. And soon, in the opinion of the majority, Brumaire was classed as a good day's work. No one regretted the effete and miserable government of the Directory. The State now was in a firm hand. Napoleon begins to bud in Bonaparte.

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CHAPTER III

NAPOLEON

NAPOLEON, First Consul, resembles the Emperor Napoleon only as the larva of some bright insect is like its future gorgeous self. The Consul was a man of peace. He was a great administrator; no man ever mastered so thoroughly the minutest machinery of government; he was Sully and Colbert and Necker in one. A great financier too; the ruined France of the Directory became prosperous under his management. And one of the legislators of all time. He considered the Code Napoléon his most enduring monument; and, indeed, the others have fallen like the flowers of the field.

As head of the State, he was careful not to offend the democratic sentiment of the French. His first act is a *plébiscite* which grounds his government on the consent of the people. He is scrupulous not to overstep his privilege, and sometimes exasperates Cambacérès, the Second Consul (who remembers the speedier methods of the Convention), by the care with which he refers any administrative measure to the control of the Council. Never a ruler more circumspect than he, more eager to profit by the experience of the great political bodies: the Senate, the Council of State. With them he undertakes the task of de-

finitively reorganizing France, and elaborates a Constitution which in its essentials has resisted more than one change of dynasty, because it has the qualities chiefly necessary in national affairs: solidity, simplicity, economy, and order.

The Revolution, in its various attempts at a Constitution, had organized the Communes, the cantons, the departments of France, but had not discovered the connecting link needed to attach the mechanism of provincial life to the vital centre, Paris. At one period, during the Reign of Terror, the ubiquitous *Sociétés populaires*—established in every town, almost in every village of the Republic—had served as an efficient if non-official means of communication with the Jacobin Government. But whether in town or country, the Jacobins now were in disgrace or non-existent. The local aristocracy had emigrated or perished on the scaffold. There was a gap between the Consuls and the Communes, a solution of continuity, fatal to unity and order. Bonaparte revived the Intendants, with a difference—instituted, I mean to say, in each department a Prefect; an agent charged with the supervision of all the affairs of a province: the collection and assessing of taxes, local expenditure, the administration of justice and police, the conduct of elections, the execution of the Government's decrees, etc. The Prefect is the vicar of the Central Power, the instrument of its will, and also the channel of its information. The First Consul corrected what might seem too rigid in his system by a complete absence of political colour in the men he chose to work it. He cast his net very wide; if a man were a good administrator, he took him, were he Jacobin or Girondin, Feuillant or even aristocrat: a La Rochefoucauld

was Prefect of Seine-et-Marne and the ex-Duke of Béthune-Charost one of the twelve Mayors of Paris. Here we touch the secret of the success of Napoleon's administration; he took account of realities, not of theories. Nothing could be more unlike the absolute, the ferocious idealism of a Robespierre or a Saint-Just, which invented a system, doubtless excellent in Cloud-Cuckoo-land, and then applied it, relentless, to an actual society which, wrapt in the fervour of their dream, they never seem to have envisaged. Napoleon, on the other hand, was nothing if not practical, and full of compromise. He took what he found ready to his hand, looked at it well, and turned it to the best advantage. And the result was something at once so supple and so strong—so exquisitely suited to its environment—that for fourscore years it served France with scarce a change, and even to-day supports solidly all of France's recent superstructures.

Out of this new world of civil servants and State officials the First Consul created, by the choice of the functionaries he appointed, and by the consideration with which he surrounded them, a new aristocracy of his own making. The service of the State was a task so great that it conferred a sort of nobility on the man who performed it adequately. To be useful to one's country was the one thing needful! Napoleon placed so high the importance of the civil servant that, until 1880 or thereabouts, the "*fonctionnaires*" of France retained the first rank, at any rate in provincial society. Fifty years ago, and even thirty years ago, a Prefect was a very considerable personage. And even greater than he was M. le Premier Président: the chief magistrate of the local courts of justice. Below Prefect and President come a number of other officials—

collector of taxes, registrar, functionaries of the Post Office, the Rivers and Forests, the Roads and Bridges, the University, the Clergy; for Napoleon made his peace with the Church, and that was, perhaps, the master-stroke of his magic wand! By the Concordat, or convention, of 1801, it was agreed between the First Consul and the Pope that the civil power should name the Bishops and Archbishops, subject to the ordination of the Pope, and that these, in their turn, should appoint the curés and vicars, subject to the ratification of the State; no claim on the forfeited Church-lands was to disturb in their rights of possession the holders of "*biens nationaux*." Thus peace was secured, and the peasants and the provincial *bourgeoisie* conciliated by the restoration of a beloved religion, which no longer threatened their tenure of its forfeited fields. Many an honest country lawyer, seated in his comfortable confiscated priory, listened with tears in his eyes to the first peal of those church bells that, for the last ten years, had hung mute and useless in the belfry.

This world of civil servants, magistrates, professors, priests, is all the more obedient to orders that it is constantly in movement. The turning wheel of Fortune and of State affairs leaves them no time to root and take on too many local interests. And from one end of France to the other they will find, wheresoever they may be appointed, the same order, the same method, the same unity. There is of late in France a strong reaction against the centralization of Napoleon's system; but we may suppose it suited the country, since it has lasted so long. The French like to depend on the central power for their administration, and then to rail at that administration, which though evidently imperfect, is on the whole, I think,

more efficient than that of any other country. The daily life of the nation still appears singularly well organized on Napoleon's bed-rock.

Judge what it must have seemed, following on the confusion of the Directory! Not since the last years of Henri Quatre had France enjoyed a period of such promise and prosperity. During the four years in which Bonaparte worked with Portalis, Tronchet, Cambacérès, and the other Jurisconsults at the making of an unparalleled Civil Code, France was admirably governed, Vendée pacified, the Church conciliated, and everywhere Napoleon showed himself open to compromise, respectful of realities, willing to reckon with the force of a tradition. He knew how to make a sacrifice and accept a compensation, how to give and take; and out of shreds and patches he made an enduring fabric, as the Romans, with their slender bricks, built monuments that stand to-day.

Meanwhile victory followed victory abroad. The mismanagement of the Directory had lost, or at least endangered, all Bonaparte's earlier conquests; but the First Consul soon redeemed their blunders. His initial dash was to secure that left bank of the Rhine which, to the sons of the Revolution, seemed the essential bulwark and natural frontier of France. Next he pounced on Milan, and, acclaimed in Lombardy by shouts of joy, he reasserted the power of France across the Alps by a splendid victory at Marengo. The next battle was at Hohenlinden. These are immortal names! For the second time the Holy Roman Empire was obliged to recognize and sanction the pretensions of France, and award her Alsace, Belgium, Savoy; and also to admit the existence of her affiliated Republics in Lombardy, Switzerland, and

Holland. Austria made peace at Lunéville in 1801, and England, in 1802, signed the Peace of Amiens. France had made short work of her enemies.

Victory, peace, success, order, prosperity, bring a monarch many friends. But Napoleon had still irreconcilable foes. They were the same that Louis XVI had feared: the Jacobins, the *émigrés*. Nothing could reconcile the first to the final loss of liberty; they had curbed their necks, for a moment, in wartime, to a yoke of their own choosing; they had, in Marat's phrase, "opposed the despotism of freedom to the despotism of Kings"; but that had been a matter of military necessity, a temporary derogation, an interlude: the Sovereign People had yielded none of its rights, which now were confiscated by one man, to all intents and purposes a monarch. Napoleon, in their sight, was as clearly an invading Brigand-chief as in the eyes of the stubbornest defenders of the Altar and the Throne. And the ultra-Royalists, although they had seen their friends and kinsfolk driven in herds to the place of butchery and slaughtered there like animals, loathed the Corsican usurper even worse than Robespierre. In their eyes Might, though never so seemly, could never stand for Right. Strange to think that these obscure Royalist conspirators, a hundred years ago, were fighting for the same principle—Right not Might—which the democracies of the world to-day defend in arms against the encroachments of the Central Empires!

Bonaparte felt the danger of their fervent fanaticism. All round him, his friends compared his rule to those last years of Henri IV which were the halcyon time of France; he could not but remember how the knife of Ravaillac had cut short that reign of prosperity.

And he, too, was in constant danger; his own generals, jealous of his supremacy, conspired with his enemies in London. The West-country, only nominally pacified, was a hotbed of plots and murderous purposes. As for the Jacobins, their one religion was the State: in defence of their adored Republic the honestest of them would stick at nothing. On Christmas Eve, 1800, an attempt was made to blow up Bonaparte by the explosion of an infernal machine as he drove to the Opera. There was an immense sensation in the theatre, women shedding tears, everyone cheering the First Consul; the windows of his wife's carriage were shattered; her daughter's neck was cut by the fragments of glass; nine persons were killed; twenty died of their injuries. Brave as he was, Napoleon was superstitious, and he was not an hereditary king, inured from his childhood to the risks of the "*métier de roi.*" This attempt made a deep impression on his sensibility. He thought it the work of fanatical Republicans, and transported a hundred and thirty Jacobins without a particle of evidence against them. Miserable man! He sent two of them to die on the island of Saint-Helena! But Fouché, his Chief of Police, himself an ex-Jacobin, assured the First Consul that the real culprits were the *émigrés*, who in foreign countries devised at their ease the plots they found means to execute in Paris.

At the bare idea Napoleon lost his *sang-froid*: "Am I a dog [he would say] to be shot down in the street? And are my murderers a sort of sacred animals?" This nervous rage must be his excuse—but no! there can be no excuse—for the assassination of the Duke of Enghien.

It was in 1804 that a fresh conspiracy, vaster and

still more formidable, was framed among the enemies of Bonaparte. Two of his generals—Pichegru, the conqueror of Holland; Moreau, who gained the victory at Hohenlinden—and a Breton yeoman, Georges Cadoudal, the very soul of the Royalist rising in the West, with three hundred Royalist gentlemen, were affiliated to the plot. Their scheme was to make a dash at Napoleon sword in hand, kidnap him one evening on the road to Malmaison—his country-house—or assail him in the midst of his Consular Guards during some ceremony on the Esplanade des Invalides. Revolt rather than murder was their object, and what they chiefly desired was to give the tyrant a taste of English hospitality (war had broken out afresh with England). Still, their swords were not for show, and they were prepared to kill him if he resisted. The police were informed in time: one of Georges Cadoudal's friends sold him for a hundred thousand crowns. The Consul was all aflame with a passion of wrath and a feverish lust for revenge. It was rumoured that one of the younger Bourbon princes was as deep in the affair as Pichegru or Georges. The real culprit seems to have been the Duke of Berry, but Napoleon's suspicions fell on the Duke of Enghien, one of the youngest and most lovable of the Bourbons, at that time living in retirement in the duchy of Baden in the society of a woman with whom he was devotedly in love. Bonaparte had no more evidence of this young man's complicity than he had required four years before when he exiled the Jacobins: he acted on a Corsican impulse. Pichegru had been arrested in February, Georges on the 9th of March; on the 15th, the young Duke of Enghien was kidnapped in his own house, a few leagues on the further side the Rhine,

was hurried in secrecy through France by the picket of dragoons who had carried him off, spirited to the Castle of Vincennes just outside Paris, tried there in the dead of night by a hastily summoned court-martial and shot in a fosse of the fortifications at two o'clock in the morning. This lawless, reckless crime, which violated the territory of a peaceful neighbour and outraged all the codes and conventions of international law, never ceased to haunt Napoleon, and more than any other action of his life discredited him in the eyes of Europe. He who loved order and discipline and regularity, he who had organized his country, he who loathed the misrule and anarchy of the Revolution, had shown himself, in this mad vengeance, this unwarranted vendetta, as utterly estranged from the spirit of law as a Marat or a Danton. In later years I think he would have given several of his victories to recall it. He mentions it in his Testament, not without remorse. He excuses himself by saying that the Count of Artois maintained sixty paid assassins at his orders in the French capital; in his latter days he laid the blame on Talleyrand and invoked the excuse of the tyrant who sacrificed Thomas à-Becket: "Why did my servant give me no chance of recalling the impulse of my wrath?"

It was a last echo of Danton's terrible policy: "*faire peur aux Royalistes*"; a warning that, in his dealings with them, the present master of France would exact an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—and perhaps even an eye for a tooth! But if in Europe the rumour of this brutal murder provoked a thrill of horror, in France it served his turn. To the mass of the French public, the innocent young duke, kidnapped from his German home, was as surely a conspirator and a

would-be assassin as Pichegru or Cadoudal: had he not paid the penalty of his crimes? His affair was, as the French say, *chose jugée*, and his memory a thing to abhor. The general adoration for Bonaparte was still increased by the danger from which he had so narrowly escaped, and the lesson to be drawn from the whole affair appeared the need of protecting him by every means. Now, the obvious way of defending a sovereign against assassination is to make his throne hereditary; there is far less inducement to remove a king who leaves an heir behind him. So, just a week after the shooting of the hapless Enghien, the Senate sent a solemn message to Bonaparte adjuring him to assume a hereditary crown—to take the style and title of Napoleon, Emperor. The country, consulted as before by a *plébiscite*, responded by a vote in which three million five hundred thousand *Ayes* took all the sting from a bare five thousand *Noes*. Meanwhile Cadoudal was executed, and Pichegru was found strangled in his prison.

"The happiest moment of my life [the Emperor said one day in his exile] was perhaps after my victories in Italy: what enthusiasm, what cries of 'Long live the Liberator of Italy!'—and all at twenty-five. From that time I saw what I might become. I already saw the world beneath me as if I were being carried through the air."

He must indeed have felt the world beneath him on that 18th of May, 1804, when he stood in Notre-Dame, crowned with laurel (as we see him in David's great picture), his generals all round him, a mass of gold and frothing feathers; his wife kneeling at his feet, her heavy jewelled train held by attendant princesses; behind him, on the steps of the altar, the Pope

of Rome, come so far to consecrate the Lord's Anointed. But, as Pope Pius lifted from the altar the very crown of Charlemagne, Napoleon suddenly reached out his arm, seized the symbol of sovereignty and, with his own hand unaided, settled it firmly on his brows.

"I found the crown of France in the gutter [he said one day later] and I picked it up on the point of my sword."

The Emperor soon found himself at war with half the world. The Peace of Amiens had but lasted a twelvemonth, and Napoleon was again fighting England tooth and nail. By a characteristic act of his arbitrary authority, he detained as prisoners of war all the English travelling or residing in France at the moment when war was declared anew. His wrath against England flamed fierier than ever since his discovery of the Royalist plot, for, in his eyes, "perfidious Albion" was not only a rival and enemy but the harbourer of all conspirators, the refuge of the Count of Artois, the chartered meeting-place of assassins. But he would soon reduce those proud islanders to nothingness! During the summer of 1804 he concentrated his extraordinary intelligence on an "immense project": that of the utter destruction of his enemy, and he spent five weeks on the north coast, in front of Dover. Why did he not succeed? Is there a Power that protects the brave against a tyrant? Napoleon seems to have forgotten nothing. His army was ready. His navy by a brilliant series of feints was to decoy our ships to defend the coasts of Egypt and of India: "Give me three days undisturbed in the Dover Straits, and with God's help I'll make an end of England!" Those three days, happily, he was not to have. In vain he stands

on the shores of Boulogne mapping out his future conquests, and muttering to himself: "*Je ferai une telle peur aux Anglais!*" In vain his ships set out for the East in the most convincing order; no visible arm from Heaven intervened. Did a clerk in the French War Office, copying out the orders for the French fleet (he must have been a functionary of some rank), betray the Emperor's secret, as it has been supposed? John Bull remains unmoved, cruises calmly in the Channel, lets them dash unopposed towards Calcutta and Alexandria. After one bare week of emotion, London is cool as a cucumber. Admiral Cornwallis continues to blockade the best French ships in Brest harbour (and there they remain "bottled up," as our modern phrase goes), while Nelson keeps an imperturbable eye on Toulon. In vain, swift as swallows, the French ships skimmed past the coasts of Ireland, to Egypt, to the West Indies. John Bull never turned a hair, smoked his pipe on his safe cliffs, and never thought of changing his plans. There were no Zeppelins in those days! And with the English boats in the Channel, no fear—despite the concentration of Frenchmen and flat-bottomed boats on the sands across the ditch—no fear lest the fuming Emperor should slip across some dark night and invite himself to breakfast. It is true that one fine day the Corsican was to taste of English hospitality on an island—but not on ours!

Napoleon in his best years was never obstinate. When he saw that one of his plans was doomed to failure, he immediately substituted another. As he himself explained to Las Cases in the *Memorial*, in his own remarkable words:

"I was never bent on forcing circumstances to fit

in to my conceptions. As a rule, I let myself be led by the course of events. Who, beforehand, can say what unsuspected accident may change the shape of things? How often I have had to alter the very essence of a plan! Indeed, I nearly always acted on a general view of things rather than in accordance with a settled project."

Therefore Napoleon abandoned the intended invasion of England (and, indeed, in after-days, was prone to say that he had never seriously meant it) and turned his mind to conquest of the Continental Powers. He had soon provoked Austrians, Russians, Prussians to a half unwilling quarrel. The two Emperors (Austria, Russia) took the field. The latter, a young man, Alexander, believed in his innocence, that he could beat Napoleon. And his first experience was Austerlitz! The battle began on the anniversary of Bonaparte's coronation, the 2d of December, 1805, early in the morning. An hour after midday, Napoleon was master of Europe. A few days later, the Austrian Francis II signed the Peace of Presburg. He renounced the proud title of Emperor of Germany. There no longer existed a Holy Roman Empire. That age-long enemy of France simply disappeared. But Napoleon permitted his vanquished foe to adopt the humbler style of Emperor of Austria as he signed away Venice, Istria, Dalmatia, Tyrol, and many lands in Southern Germany. And, in place of the historic Empire—the natural enemy of France—Napoleon created a new league of the German States which he called the Confederation of the Rhine, no terrible foe, but, in Mr. Fisher's excellent phrase, "a mosaic of weak and warring Governments," for what Napoleon feared above all things was the unity of Germany.

Then the King of Prussia declared war on France; his two armies were annihilated in nine days as Iéna, as Auerstadt, followed Austerlitz. And Napoleon marched into Berlin. There he learns that the Russians are coming to the aid of their allies, rushes towards them, beats them five times running on the banks of the Vistula, and hunts them into Poland. At Eylau they attempt to resist, but at Friedland the Russian General allows himself to be caught as in a trap. And the French victory was so complete that Alexander believed his defeat irretrievable and consented to the conqueror's terms of peace. At Tilsit, at the first contact with his enemy the enthusiastic Alexander became his adoring friend.

By this campaign Prussia was hopelessly mutilated, exhausted, and burdened with a French army of occupation; Russia had to recognize these changes and to accept a new kingdom of Westphalia, with Napoleon's brother Jérôme for its king. What is more, the Russian Emperor had to consent to an alliance with the new Charlemagne. Napoleon was in the finest spirits. He liked the alliance; he liked the Tsar: "A very handsome, good young Emperor, with more mind than he is generally credited with"; he liked being able to patronize handsome Emperors, beautiful propitiatory Queens (like Louise of Prussia), and his old enemy, the ex-Emperor of Germany. He loved to dominate. And again he turned his thoughts to our unconquered island, more hated than ever now since, at Trafalgar, in 1805, Nelson had destroyed the French fleet. So, master of Europe in 1807, Napoleon parries the thrust by decreeing the Continental Blockade—that is to say, all European ports were to be closed to English trade; they should neither

buy, nor sell, nor have any traffic with us. England was excommunicated!

And then irrepressible Austria, always defeated, never irremediably vanquished—Austria, influenced by England, again declared war. Napoleon, who just then was occupied in Spain, in a blaze of anger rushed across the Pyrenees, darted his lightnings on Austria, conquered again at Wagram, and imposed peace at Vienna in 1809.

Rivoli in 1796; Marengo in 1800; Austerlitz in 1805; Wagram in 1809—how many more crushing defeats would Austria require before Napoleon could be sure of her submission? Did some accident set him thinking of the old distich—how Austria made her way in the world not by fighting but by marrying: "*Tu, felix Austria, nube*"? Did the constant revolts of the untamed Empire make him devise a new manner of bond and curb? Did the difficulties of establishing a succession for the throne of France suggest the wisdom of an Imperial alliance? Josephine was six years older than her husband; she could no longer expect to give him an heir. He had loved her with an ardent, sensual, jealous passion—she was the only woman he had loved (so he averred on Saint-Helena); but it was clear she could not give a prince to the Empire. Reasons of State prevailed: like Titus, "*dimisit invitus invitam.*" A divorce was pronounced between the French Emperor and his wife. In 1810 he married the daughter of the Emperor of Austria, Marie-Louise. In 1811 a son was born to them: the King of Rome. Napoleon had now entered the family of monarchs; the little Corsican lieutenant had become the nephew by marriage of Marie-Antoinette.

So lofty, so rapid an ascension may well disturb a

conqueror's moral balance. "If I had been placed so high," said the Russian Emperor, as he gazed on Napoleon's statue dominating the column of the Place Vendôme—"if I had been placed so high, my head, too would have been dizzy." Lord Rosebery is right in supposing that supreme power destroyed the equilibrium of Napoleon's mind. After Wagram, after the Austrian alliance, it is easy to see now that the conqueror should have lain low, should have consolidated his magnificent position and not have sought to extend it. It was difficult for the society of sovereigns to admit into their circle this victorious usurper who had humiliated them all. Yet if Bonaparte had shown himself the Bonaparte of 1799—the scholarly, quiet, unassuming Bonaparte who had disarmed suspicion before displaying his full power—it is probable that Europe would have swallowed that difficult doctrine of the "Natural Limits," would have accorded France the left bank of the Rhine and the frontiers of the Empire of Gaul. . . . But, now that Napoleon thought himself sure of the non-opposition, and even of the support, of Austria, he became more than ever overweening and extravagant in his pretensions. The expansion of France threatened the breathing-space of Europe. Charlemagne of old had had one only brother with whom to divide the spoils of Empire. Napoleon had a whole ravenous family to find in thrones and crowns: France, Naples, Westphalia, Holland, did not exhaust his requirements; Lucien, Pauline, Caroline, Elisa, were still without a sceptre. "The Napoleon who declared that all the countries of Europe should keep their archives in Paris, that the French Empire should become the mother-country of all sovereignties, that all the kings of the earth

should have palaces of residence in Paris and attend in state the coronations of the French Emperors . . . had obviously lost the balance of his reason. He had ceased to calculate coolly and to see any bounds—moral, physical, or international—to any freak of ambition which might occur to him."[1]

At this period of his career, did Napoleon lose his grasp of reality? Was he really mad? His ministers thought so; his wild dreams of universal conquest filled them with a mortal apprehension. The feelings of Talleyrand and Fouché may be likened to those of a traveller driven by a lunatic chauffeur along some mountain road that skirts a precipice. And not only themselves, but the future of France was imperilled. All the great functionaries who approached the Emperor at that moment appear to have shared their dire misgiving. "*Voulez-vous que je vous dise la vérité?*" said Decrès, the Minister of Marine, to Marshal Marmont, Duke of Ragusa, in 1810—"*Voulez-vous que je vous dise la vérité? L'Empereur est fou, tout-à-fait fou! Il nous culbutera, tant que nous sommes.*"

And Bernadotte, his old comrade-in-arms, just adopted by the King of Sweden for his heir, did not scruple to call his Emperor of yesterday "*un fou dangereux*"—a dangerous lunatic.

Narbonne, his general, his minister, the man whom Napoleon loved, exclaimed in 1812: "Where is the keeper of this man of genius?"

"He's a madman!" said Fouché—"*C'est un insensé! Il faut en finir!*"

Was he mad, or was he merely, as Talleyrand said, "uncivilized?" At any rate his vast dreams, his disregard of the possible, his violence, his impulsive-

[1] Lord Rosebery, *Napoleon: the Last Phase.*

'ness, his egotism, fostered in those whom he offended a belief in the derangement of his mind. A Volney —whom he kicked in the stomach for saying that France wanted the Bourbons, and who was carried unconscious from his presence—or Berthier, whom he is said to have attacked with the tongs, or that chief justice whom he belaboured with his fists, may be excused for having their doubts as to his sanity. Too often his servants and his ministers pleaded lunacy in their sovereign to attenuate the vileness of their treacherous intrigues, yet in the treachery of a Fouché or a Talleyrand, love of country played its part. These ministers had undergone the strenuous training of the Jacobins; in all their avatars, whether Terrorists, Republicans, pillars of the Empire or the Restoration, they were at heart the men of '93; they had one religion, their country, and one only virtue, patriotism. Despite their lack of honour, fidelity, morality, or truth, they had one ideal which constantly they served—the ultimate advantage of France.

And it was not to the advantage of France, in their thinking, that Napoleon should whirl her without cease along the mad career of a second Attila. From the day when the Emperor began to cast his eyes with envy on Turkey and India a secret discord divided him from the heads of his administration, for Talleyrand and Fouché were disciples of Danton. They conceived France as a modern Gaul; so much, no more. Certainly not a universal *Monarchia*. "*Le Rhin, les Alpes, les Pyrénées* [said Talleyrand], *sont la conquête nationale. Le reste est la conquête de l'Empereur; la France n'y tient pas!*"

And the ministers of a dangerous madman (as they thought) began to hold private confabulations with

his enemies. In 1809 they did all they could to undermine, by secret intrigue, the policy of their sovereign—traitors to Napoleon, not to France. When, in 1808, Napoleon went to Erfurt to discuss with Alexander the proposed conquest of Constantinople, Talleyrand lay in wait for the Tsar and accosted him:

"Sire, what are you doing here? Your part is to save Europe! And you can only save Europe by resisting Napoleon! The French nation is civilized; its sovereign is not civilized. The Emperor of Russia is civilized; not so the Russian people. Let the Emperor of Russia be the ally of the people of France!"

The subtle, sentimental, vacillating Alexander was taken with this argument. Indeed, already the fascinating prestige of Napoleon, which had aroused his enthusiasm at Tilsit, was wearing thin. He perceived that the lion's ally must always accept the second place: Russia was sacrificed to the exigencies of the Continental Blockade. The trade of Russia demanded intercourse with England, which the French Emperor forbade.

Talleyrand had time to indoctrinate an apt pupil before he met with a richly earned disgrace. In 1809 Napoleon's mother, shrewd and suspicious as are the unlearned women of the South, surprised the secret intrigue of Talleyrand and Fouché—their carefully hidden colloquies in a friend's country house at Suresnes, and she herself heard Fouché say that phrase we have quoted: "*C'est un insensé! Il faut en finir!*" She warned her son. In six days Napoleon came posting back from Spain, dashed across France to Paris, sent Talleyrand to the rightabout, depriving him of his charge of Grand Chamberlain; he kept

Fouché, indispensable as head of the police, but he kept him under watch and ward.

This was in 1810. The times were troubled. Napoleon seemed possessed by a feverish, reckless desire to strain his fortunes to the utmost. The sovereigns of Europe found him an impossible neighbour. We have seen how in 1804 he carried off the Duke of Enghien and shot him, violating the territory of the Duke of Baden, with whom he was on terms of peace. In 1805 he abducted the English Minister at Hamburg and carried him off to Paris, him and his papers. This was no matter of a mere Rhenish Margrave and a French *émigré*, it concerned the plenipotentiary of a Great Power living under the protection of the German Emperor. In 1809 he seized upon the Pope—swooped down upon the Holy Father in his quiet Quirinal, drove him away, under military escort, to a prison, first at Grenoble, then at Savona, finally, in 1811, at Fontainebleau.

But of all his abductions, his sequestrations, none was so extraordinary as his retention, in 1808, of the whole royal family of Spain! Here Napoleon shows himself completely the brigand-chief. His prisoners were not interesting; never had the Peninsula sunk so low in point of prosperity, power, or influence as under the rule of Charles IV. The Bourbon King and Queen were like an odious caricature of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette: he, kind and loyal, but almost imbecile, incapable of any activity of body or mind, and hypnotized by his blind devotion to his wife; she, arrogant, energetic, dissolute, with only one thought in her head—the advancement and good pleasure of her minister and favourite, the handsome parvenu Godoï, whom she had created Prince of Peace. Godoï

was the tyrant of Spain, hated by the nation. The King's eldest son, Ferdinand, Prince of the Asturias, rose in arms against the monstrous regimen of his mother and Godoï. The old King, bewildered, abdicated one day, recalled his abdication the next, and watched his kingdom drift into civil war. Then Napoleon invited the King, the Queen, the Prince of the Asturias, and the Prince of Peace, who had all appealed to his decision, to meet him on the frontiers of France and Spain; his master mind would cut the Gordian knot of a family quarrel. Too angry with each other to suspect this benevolent foreigner, the King, the Queen, the two Princes—all talking at once and very excited—arrived at the rendezvous. Napoleon gave them the wisest, the kindest advice; pacified the two rival Kings; induced Prince Ferdinand to abdicate in favour of his father; persuaded King Charles in his turn to abdicate—in favour of Napoleon; and finally himself passed on the crown to his elder brother, Joseph Bonaparte, King of Naples (whose throne, which this preferment left empty, would come in handy for Murat, who had married Caroline Bonaparte).

When the despoiled, bewildered Bourbons would fain have turned their faces home, they found the frontiers closed. Princely pleasure-houses, ample incomes, had been provided for them all in France, but there they must remain, while, in their stead, Joseph Bonaparte should cross the Pyrenees. Fontainebleau, Chambord, Valençay, Compiègne were set at their disposal. But they were captives, Prince of Peace and all! In vain they protested. Spain rose in victorious insurrection, all her factions at once fused to an indignant unity at this insult to her national honour;

in vain Europe lifted hands of horror and England sent an Expeditionary Force to Portugal and Spain under a new young general, Wellington. Napoleon was not disturbed. For some time he had been anxious about his western frontier. The Empire appeared lopsided in its immense development; its eastern extent was now prodigious; Hamburg was the *chef-lieu* of the French department of the Elbe, Rome the capital of the department of the Tiber. But in the south-west the Pyrenean boundary was but a few days' march from Paris. It was a relief to behold Spain, at last, practically absorbed into the Empire. Napoleon wrote to his brother: "Spain is quite another thing, much better than Naples. It is a kingdom of eleven million inhabitants and a hundred and fifty millions of revenue, which places you at three days' journey from Paris and covers entirely one of our frontiers."

Napoleon was satisfied. And yet that long, that harassing Peninsular War of Independence was really the beginning of the end. But he was much occupied in the North. The alliance with Russia had not proved durable. The blockade which was intended to starve and ruin England had incidentally stifled Russian trade; that choice of an Austrian princess had humiliated the enthusiastic Alexander, who had intended one of his own sisters to wear the French Imperial crown; and also Napoleon would not listen to the Muscovite dream of Constantinople and the Dardanelles: he meant himself to be Emperor of the East. War broke out between the two allies in 1812. Here too, as in Spain, Napoleon made the mistake of underrating his adversary. The constancy and courage of the Spaniards in repelling a usurper had surprised

the great man, who esteemed them according to the supine indifference and shiftless idleness with which they had supported the yoke of the Spanish Bourbons. Neither could he guess that these inconsistent Russians—the children of Europe, lovable and puerile—would show themselves capable of burning their capital and devastating their provinces in defence of their country. Napoleon, like all the great men born of the Revolution, could understand no patriotism but his own; with the result that this heir of the ideas of '89 will succumb to a series of popular and national movements subversive of that "Roman Peace," that implacable Empire, which he sought to impose on all the races of Europe.

The French public was not informed of these new Russian hostilities until some ten days after they had commenced. The nation received the tidings with a calm that masked something of the sullenness of despair. The wars had gone on for eleven years, and there was still no end in sight. "My men would fight for ever [said the Emperor] if they were not so fond of their families." Frenchmen are very fond of their families, of their fields and farms, their towns; they like, too, to turn an honest penny, to lay it by, to spend it wisely in some solid acquisition; to work like artists at their trades and to live sociably in a friendly society. This ancient life of France was impossible during the whole duration of the First Empire.

In March, 1812, Napoleon held his court in Dresden; it was perhaps the proudest moment of his life. He stayed there all the spring and early summer. The Emperor of Austria, the King of Prussia, all the princes of the Confederation of the Rhine, formed his

EMPIRE FRANÇAIS
EN 1810
Tilsit
Friedland
Eylau
ROYAUME
DE
PRUSSE
EMPIRE
RUSSE
Hambourg
GRANDE
BRETAGNE
La Haye
HOLLANDE
Rme DE
WESTPHALIE
Rme DE SAXE
Leipzig
Iéna
Boulogne
Lille
BELGIQUE
Waterloo
Fleurus
Rhin
Jemappes
Coblentz
Amiens
Austerlitz
Rme DE
WURTEMBERG
Rme DE
Danube
Vienne
Presbourg
Ulm
BAVIÈRE
EMPIRE D'AUTRICHE
Nantes
Loire
Bâle
SUISSE
St GOTHARD
SIMPLON
Savoie
Lyon
Campo Formio
PROVINCES ILLYRIENNES
Bordeaux
Garonne
Toulouse
Rhône
Avignon
Piémont
Marengo
EMPIRE
OTTOMAN
Marseille
Cannes
Saragosse
ESPAGNE
CORSE
Ajaccio
I. d'Elbe
Rome

following. Saxony, Westphalia, came and bowed down before him; Bavaria was his washpot, and over Würtemberg he cast his shoe. Every sovereign in Europe except the Sultan, the Russian Emperor, and the King of England was at his feet: "It was the greatest moment of my life!" he said on Saint-Helena.

On the 22nd of June he declared war on Russia. He was in too great a hurry. He had learned at Dresden that he would have the support neither of Sweden nor of Turkey; he would have no allies in the north or on the east: "I was too hasty," he owned; "I should have stayed a year on the Niemen and, first of all, have made a meal of Prussia." Instead of that he pursued his old victorious plan: a dash, a pounce, a knock-down blow; and he seats himself in the capital of the conquered enemy, slashes with his sword a slice or two from the fattest part of their territory, imposes himself as suzerain inclined to a *Pax Romana*. . . . All went at first according to promise: Napoleon crossed the Niemen, gained a battle at Smolensk, another on the Moskowa, and entered Moscow in September. But there, instead of dictating terms and imposing conditions, he found a novel state of things. The Russians, as we know, burned their ancient capital. He encountered emptiness, void, desolation. He was there like a man boxing with a moving shadow: the very strength that he put out ensured his fall.

It is difficult to understand why Napoleon should have lingered among the charred and blackened ruins of Moscow until after the middle of October. Probably he hoped that Alexander would capitulate. "Our Emperor thought the war was over [wrote Ségur]. Day by day he expected an answer from Petersburg. He nourished his hopes on his recollec-

tions of Tilsit, of Erfurt. Was it likely he should have less influence over Alexander at Moscow? And, like all men who have long been lucky, he expected his desires to come true." But the master of the empty house still gave no sign of life.

And the climate surprised the conqueror by its mildness. In his bulletin of the 14th of October he writes: "*Le temps est encore beau,*" and even on the 27th: "*Le temps est superbe; les chemins sont beaux; c'est le reste de l'automne.*"

The Corsican could not dream how sudden, how fatal might be the change of the equinox, while the old Russian, Kutosov, smiled and said: "We have an ally worth all of Bonaparte's; his name is General Winter!"

And Napoleon continues his letter:

"*C'est le soleil et les belles journées de Fontainebleau. L'armée est dans un pays extrêmement riche qui peut se comparer aux meilleurs de la France.*"

On the 7th of November there came a sudden frost, and on the 16th the thermometer marked 18° Centigrade below freezing-point; the roads were covered with a slippery glaze of ice; the French and German horses of the cavalry, the artillery, the transport, perished by thousands every night: thirty thousand of them in a few days (I am quoting Napoleon's bulletin), with the terrible result that the cannons, the waggons of munitions, all the commissariat stocks and stores, the provisions that accompany an army of six hundred thousand men, could no longer take the road and had to be destroyed, for the most part, in the midst of the wintry plains of Russia!

That army, so fortunate and prosperous on the 6th of November, was, ten days later, shorn of its

cavalry, its artillery, its transport service, alike incapable of giving battle or of getting food. Between it and that frontier of the Niemen which they had passed so joyously in June stretched fifty days of dreary marching in unimaginable snow and slippery ice, while the Cossacks viciously harried them on all sides. When the pursuit ended on the western frontier, more than three hundred thousand men of the Grand Army had disappeared.

The dispatch which brought this terrible news to Paris on the 18th of December, 1812, concluded with these words, intended to reassure and to console: "His Majesty's health has never been better. It seemed heartless; but Napoleon knew his Paris. He must be alive and present. The Parisians only two days later, learned that the Emperor was in their midst. He knew that the magic of his presence alone could comfort and inspire his people in this calamity. He had heard in Russia of the unpopularity of the war, even when that war presented no reverses, and recently he had learned how, towards the close of October, General de Malet had spread a false report of the Emperor's death, and had attempted to accomplish a Royalist *coup d'état*. The thing had failed, Malet had been shot, and here was the Emperor, bringing bad news, it is true, but full of prestige and resource. Universal as was the desire for peace, Napoleon had but to appear in order to carry the day; in the course of four months he raised an army of 226,000 men and 457 guns and hurried at their head to Germany—to Germany, where Prussia had already joined his enemies, where a new disaster might lose him the support of the Confederation of the Rhine, where Austria herself seemed but a dubious friend. . . .

"*Toute l'Europe marchait avec nous il y a un an; toute l'Europe marche aujourd'hui contre nous,*" wrote Napoleon in a dispatch of this campaign; and he added that Europe always follows the lead of either France or England. But he did not despair of defeating his arch-enemy, though still the seat of war continued to contract, though the immense limits of the Empire began to shrink and shrivel. The battle was at Moscow in 1812; at Dresden, at Leipzig in 1813; in 1814 the enemy are ravaging the fields of France! All the world was now in truth against Napoleon; at Leipzig the Saxons and the Würtembergers had ratted and joined the enemy in the middle of the fight. The Bavarians, who yesterday had fought in Napoleon's cohorts, attempted to stop his retreat and to bar the passage of the Rhine. France was invaded —north, south, and east—by more than seven hundred thousand men eager to avenge the defeats and disasters which all the nations of Europe, save England, had suffered at her hands.

From Frankfort, in November, 1813, the Allies sent an envoy to Paris offering to treat if Napoleon would accept as a basis the "natural frontiers" of France: the Rhine, the Alps, the Mediterranean, and the Pyrenees. This was all the Revolution had ever claimed; this was all that in his youth he had gone out to win; the rest was over and above. But Napoleon could not dispense with that magnificent superfluity. He refused; and the nations pressed round him again in battle; again his Empire dwindled and tottered; again they offered terms. This time the limits were narrower; he must renounce Belgium and Savoy. But even so, the France he could have kept was the old glorious France of the monarchy. Napo-

leon must have lost the balance of his reason when he refused to make peace. At last began that Campaign of France which was as brilliant, as marvellous, as heroic, but not as successful, as his first campaign in Italy. Wherever he fought he triumphed, but wherever he was not his generals were beaten. The army, in truth, was exhausted, worn out; and, moreover, Napoleon, in the fifteen years of his fighting them, had taught his art to his enemies.

The Emperor himself was no longer what he had been. The very thin man had become a very fat one. His mental energy, still capable of lightning flashes and surprising darts, would sink sometimes into a sort of lethargy, a morbid and feverish activity alternating with a strange listlessness. He had become garrulous and discursive. In fact, his youth was past. He had said at Austerlitz to one of his generals: "One has but a short time for war. I am good for another six years, and then I shall have to stop." He had spun the six years out to eight. But now he had to stop.

As the armies of Europe marched on Paris, Napoleon decided to fight his last battle under the walls of the capital. But before he could bring up his forces, Paris had capitulated to the Tsar.

In Paris, Alexander met again his old friend Talleyrand. While Napoleon at Fontainebleau was sending a message of surrender to the Allies, the minister he had disgraced was negotiating the future of France with the sovereigns of Europe. In his hotel of the rue Saint-Florentin he treated with the enemy as Great Power with Great Power, recommending the return of the Bourbons to the exclusion of Napoleon and all the persons of his family. The ex-

Emperor had hoped for a Regency and the eventual succession of his infant son. But as Marshal after Marshal forsook the hopeless cause that last hope had to be abandoned. The little King of Rome, dethroned, proclaimed merely Prince of Parma and Duke of Reichstadt, was to receive his education at the court of his grandfather as became an Austrian Prince. Marie-Louise was to return with her little boy to Vienna. Napoleon himself was to receive the Empire of Elba, a small island off the coast of Tuscany, between Leghorn and Corsica. One after another, the Bonapartes vanished from the scene of affairs, richly pensioned off in their golden obscurity. On the 4th of April, Napoleon's Marshals—Ney, Oudinot, Lefebvre, Macdonald—forced him to accept these terms of peace; on the 6th he signed the Act of Abdication, and the Senate proclaimed the reign of Louis XVIII.

In his despair Napoleon attempted to poison himself—at least that old legend, once discredited, is again accepted by recent historians. And surely some warrant is given to it by a phrase in the adieux of Fontainebleau; and also in that line of the Act of Abdication where the ex-Emperor declares himself "*prêt à quitter la France, et même la vie, pour le bien de la patrie.*" But Napoleon had not yet run his course. A wonderful, a miraculous adventure was still in front of him. Life seemed over; but the future had its secret to impart. . . . Meanwhile, after a long spell of dreary waiting in his dull, deserted palace, on the 20th of April at Fontainebleau he bade farewell to his soldiers of the Old Guard: "All was not lost while you fought by my side, but the war would have gone on for ever, would have degenerated into a civil war, and France would have lost her prosperity.

I have sacrificed my interests to those of the country. I am going away.

"And you, my friends, will go on serving France. The happiness of France is all I think of, the one desire of my heart. Do not pity me. If I have consented to survive, it is to serve your fame. I mean to chronicle the great exploits we have achieved together. Adieu! Farewell, my children, my comrades, farewell! Forget me not!"

And so Napoleon set out for Elba, an island some two hundred kilometres square, containing two little towns and seven villages. The modern Charlemagne was Emperor of this principality, "*en toute souveraineté*," and the Treaty of Fontainebleau guaranteed him an income of two millions of francs—£80,000—never paid.

He has wished us Adieu. We may wish him Au revoir!

SOURCES CONSULTED:

Same as preceding chapter; especially Vandal, Sorel (vols. vi. and vii.), Fisher, Lavisse, Kermoysan, Chateaubriand.

THIERS: *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, t. viii.

LORD ROSEBERY: *Napoleon: The Last Phase.*

MARQUIS DE SÉGUR: *La Campagne de Russie.*

EMILE BOURGEOIS: *Manuel Historique de Politique Etrangère.*

Those who like to find in fiction the living reflection of a historical period may read with pleasure and profit:

BALZAC: *Une Ténébreuse Affaire, Le Médecin de Compagne.*

SAINTE-BEUVE: *Volupté.*

PAUL CLAUDEL: *L'Otage.*

STENDHAL: *La Chartreuse de Parme.*

VICTOR HUGO: *Les Misérables.*

TOLSTOI: *War and Peace.*

These are much more than historical novels; they are histories.

CHAPTER IV

THE RETURN OF THE BOURBONS

EIGHT days after the departure of Napoleon for his microscopic Empire of Elba, the Count of Artois entered France at Nancy as Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom; the first of the royal princes to leave France, he was also the first to return. Though something of a fool and not overfond of risking his skin, Artois was every inch a royal figure, handsome, elegant, generous. He was at once very religious and essentially frivolous; devout, noble, courteous, there was enough of the knight about him to please the taste of a romantic age (and we are just coming to the Romantics), but Fate was unkind to Artois in bringing him into power; he was cast by Nature for the part of a Pretender and had not learned how to play the King.

Chateaubriand dubbed him "the Christian Knight," and added, "he has aged a good deal since I sketched him thus, but there is still a likeness." Poetic stories were rife concerning him—how, for instance, on the death of Madame de Polastron he had sworn never to love another woman, and had kept his word, mere Lothario as he had been until then. He was as full of prejudices, and obstinacies, and ignorances, as a charming narrow-minded Prince may be on the shady side of fifty.

His brother was a very different person. The staunchest Royalists quailed a little when they thought of Louis XVIII entering critical and half-disaffected Paris as the successor of Napoleon. Artois had been first and foremost in all the Royalist intrigues, but at least you knew where you had him. There was something selfish and neutral about the sceptical Louis, generally inclined (like his brother, Louis Seize) to think that in every question there was a great deal to be said on both sides. Naturally Liberal, the circumstances of his life in exile (hunted from refuge to refuge as the advance of Napoleon dislodged him from Poland, from Prussia, from Italy) and the haunting memory of his murdered kinsfolk had fostered in him incoherent rancours and sudden transitory rages little less violent than his brother's convictions. Such explosions were rare; all these chances and changes had developed in Louis XVIII a certain moral indifference, a detachment from men and things, an absence of belief in anything, a disenchanted misanthropy, natural under the circumstances in a prince whose experience had been so cruel and whose nature was shrewd, wise, delicate, intelligent, but bitter and small. A quoter of Horace, a lover of letters (perhaps an author under the rose), this fastidious, gouty, and indolent valetudinarian saw himself promoted to the stormiest throne in Europe.

Louis XVIII accumulated in his person all sorts of reasons why Paris should dislike him. Some of the citizens could remember how *Monsieur* had solemnly sworn never to leave the kingdom in February, 1791, and had successfully decamped in June. The soldiers knew that he had fought with the Prussians at Valmy (he had more physical courage than his brother),

when the first victory of the Republic had put him and his *émigrés* to the rout. And for years now he had lived in England, returning in the unpopular character of a country squire from Buckinghamshire, a gouty old *Anglais* of sixty, impotent, enormous in bulk, his helpless legs wrapped to the knees in wadded gaiters. Ignorant of the recent growth of France, he was, however, dignified and liberal in mind. He had not lived so many years in England for nothing. His first act was to grant a Charter, that is to say a political constitution which established in France the Parliamentary system, ensured the liberty of public worship (while declaring the Catholic Church the religion of the State), professed all men equal before the law and the tax-collector, admitted in a certain degree the liberty of the Press, confirmed the existence of Napoleon's new nobility, recognized all the debts of the State, whatever their origin, and guaranteed the holders of confiscated estates in the possession of their lands, by whomsoever forfeited. It was a Charter informed with the spirit of '89. But the King returned to France surrounded by a world of *émigrés* who would die rather than countenance that spirit. Far more than the King, and even more than Artois, they had learned nothing and forgotten nothing.

What were the feelings of the French when the Allies with their triumphant armies escorted the Bourbons to Paris?

The prospect of peace, so long desired in vain, made at the first blush any change appear acceptable. Twenty years of constant battle had exhausted the nation; and the last two wars—Russia, Spain—had brought home to the people the terrible conviction that, under Napoleon, peace would never be attained.

since he would fight for the pleasure of it, for mere conquest and magnificence, in spite of the despair of his subjects. Doubtless the first movement, at the fall of Bonaparte, was not unlike that which saluted the fall of Robespierre. There were those who, like Necker's daughter, Madame de Staël, said openly that the defeat of Bonaparte meant the happiness of France.

But when the people of Paris saw the conquering armies—those armies they had been used to vanquish—marching proudly through their streets, there came a sudden revulsion of opinion. Listen to the same Madame de Staël:

"When I saw Paris occupied by their foreign armies, ignorant of our language, our history, our great men, and the Tartar sentries pacing in front of the Tuileries and the Louvre, I felt a pang beyond endurance!"

Chateaubriand, another enemy of Bonaparte, who, like Germaine Necker, had returned to Paris in the train of the Allies, shall be our next witness:

"I own [he says] that I dreaded the first impression produced by the King."

The impotent old gentleman from Buckinghamshire was so strange an equivalent for the terrible, adored, and dreaded Emperor. Yet above those swollen feet, those legs muffled in their ludicrous gaiters *à l'antique*, above that huge belly, that unwieldy frame, there was a firm, pink face, not unhandsome, rather noble; an eye witty and wise, an expression of unruffled majesty; Louis XVIII had no doubts as to his rights or his reception: he was merely the First Monarch in Europe returning home.

And this is what Chateaubriand saw at his entry, on the 3rd of May, 1814, when the King went to Notre Dame.

To spare the sovereign the spectacle of a foreign army occupying his capital, the streets were lined with the soldiers of Napoleon's Old Guard. And they contemplated the man who had vanquished their Emperor:

"I think I have never seen on any human visage an expression so threatening, so terrible, as I saw on all of theirs. These grenadiers, the conquerors of Europe, covered with wounds, deprived of their leader and forced to salute an old King invalided, not by his victories but by his years, under compulsion of the Russians, Austrians, Prussians, who occupied Napoleon's invaded capital. . . . Some of them, frowning under their huge fur busbies till they masked their eyes, affected not to see their sovereign; others drew down the corners of their mouth in the bitterest grimace of contempt and rage; and there were some who snarled like tigers, their teeth gleaming through their fierce moustaches. When the time came to present arms, their aspect was such as to make the mere spectator tremble."

It was a strange Paris; white scarves and ribbons fluttered everywhere; in the streets, the quaint, shabby figures of the *émigrés*, hastening home from all the corners of Europe, greeted each other with a courtliness of phrase and a grace of gesture unknown to the magnificent barbarity of the Empire. The streets were full of Cossacks, Pomeranian Grenadiers, and diplomatists from every court. There were as many sovereigns in Paris as during the palmy days of Empire, but, though Louis XVIII slept in the bed of Bonaparte, the real king of Paris was Alexander. The two monarchs were on less enthusiastic terms than France and Russia had been at Tilsit and at Erfurt;

the haughty calm of Louis displeased the young autocrat who had brought him back from exile.

Thrones fall, Republics are reversed, emperors banished, kings come to their own again; the surface of French history appears a sequence of whirlpools; and yet life continues, and France has to be administered, and in fact *is* administered, with a continuity of order which at first sight appears miraculous. Behind the façade of Sovereignty (which so often tumbles down and has hastily to be replaced in another style) there is a solid block of building which contains the Government Offices. The King and Artois knew nothing of the needs and requirements of the France they revisited after a lapse of thirty years; since their departure the country had been subject to many a phase of power—the Republic, the Reign of Terror, the Directory, the Consulate, the Empire,—and had survived them all, thanks to the admirable Civil Service working steadily in the background. And fortunately there still remained in France two ministers, who had been through most of these administrations, men of great capacity, one of whom at least had the advantage of being personally known to the Allied sovereigns. These were Talleyrand and Fouché. The King of France refused at first the services of Fouché, who had voted the death of Louis Seize and was in part responsible for the massacre of the Royalists at Lyons under the Terror. But he accepted the ministry of Talleyrand, a man of birth and breeding, on whom B. P. (this was the King's graceful fashion of alluding to his predecessor: Buona Parte) had conferred no additional honour when he dubbed him Prince of Benevento.

Talleyrand had been for five-and-twenty years a

moving force in French history. We saw him first on the Champ-de-Mars when, as Bishop of Autun, he said the Mass of Federation before the King and the assembled people; a little later he organized for the Constituent Assembly a scheme of popular education; next he was Danton's colleague and collaborator; under Robespierre he had fallen into disgrace—and no circumstance could better have favoured his fortunes in 1814; he had been a pillar of the Directory, and yet he had helped to overthrow it in order to establish the Consulate; in 1797 he was Bonaparte's counsellor and confidant: between them they arranged the invasion of Egypt, and throughout the first glorious years of Empire, Talleyrand had administered the conquests of Napoleon; then came their quarrel in 1810; and here was Talleyrand back again and the Emperor at Elba.

Talleyrand had now in front of him the most difficult task of all his career. After a preliminary treaty at Paris, it was decided that the sovereigns and statesmen of Europe should meet in Congress at Vienna in order to divide among themselves the spoils of Napoleon's Empire. The Allied armies in their thousands continued to occupy France, while the French continued to hold some fifty European citadels, including such strong places as Hamburg, Antwerp, Mantua, the fortresses of Belgium, the Rhine, and Piedmont. There was still the magnificent remnant of the French army. It is just possible that the country might have made better terms than were offered for the Treaty of Paris. But France panted for peace with a sort of exasperation; the foreign armies were there, in possession: Cossacks, Russians, Austrians, Croats, Germans, Prussians, English—dangerous ten-

ants, each with their wrongs to avenge. It was better, if possible, to remain with them on amicable terms. Besides, Talleyrand's manner was seldom the "*manière forte*"; he was yielding, insidious, perfidious, claiming nothing, yet little by little filching, appropriating, a great deal. Nothing could have been humbler than his advent at the Congress of Vienna.

He was no longer the brilliant host, the great statesman of the rue Saint-Florentin, who had housed the Emperor Alexander as his guest. The abjection of France was expressed in his very mien. He represented a sort of poor relation of the Great Powers whose bankruptcy was putting them to a great deal of trouble. Humble, serviceable, amiable, Talleyrand was content with anything they offered; his great phrase was: "*La France ne demande rien!*" In the Ambassadors' saloon the four Great Powers—England, Austria, Russia, Prussia—confabulated apart; by an insolent protocol they had arranged that they alone should distribute the spoils of Napoleon, while France, so to speak, was left to wait outside in the hall with Spain, Portugal, Sardinia, Naples, the Netherlands, Bavaria, Würtemberg, Saxony, Denmark, and Sweden. In this humiliation Talleyrand found his opportunity.

He reverted to the classic policy of France, the policy of Richelieu, which always has been to constitute the King of France the champion and elder brother of the smaller sovereigns; and as Richelieu had opposed this following of small States to the mighty agglomerations of Austria and Spain, so Talleyrand intended to counterbalance the Four in council by a sort of League or Entente of the lesser thrones. . . . Who on some country hillside has not seen the kestrel or the cuckoo put to flight by a flock of doves or

swallows? The true policy of France has always been to neutralize, ruin, or disperse the great agglomerations in order to secure the advantage of the secondary Powers.

While Talleyrand consulted his companions in exclusion, the mighty Four (who thought to dispose of Europe at their own sweet will) found it increasingly difficult to agree among themselves. A general conflagration appeared imminent. The King of Prussia wanted Saxony, which Russia was half inclined to let him have in exchange for his share of Poland; Austria meant at all costs to regain her suzerainty in Italy. Talleyrand, as spokesman of the smaller Powers, could not have cornered a united Four. He found them almost at daggers drawn, and profited by the occasion to reintroduce France into the Upper Room on equal terms as a welcomed fifth—welcomed, that is, by two of the disputants—while he organized, with a view to balancing the friendship between Russia and Prussia, a new and surprising *entente* between Austria, England, and France.

A war between the two Leagues appeared close at hand; Bavaria, Würtemberg, and the Netherlands signified their adhesion to the Franco-Austrian-English Alliance: "The Coalition of the Four is destroyed [wrote Talleyrand to Louis XVIII]; France marches with two of the greatest Powers in Europe, with three secondary States, and others will join us: all those whose principles and maxims are opposed to the Revolution. France is the soul and the leader of a union formed to put in practice the principles she has proclaimed."

In fact, Talleyrand was radiant, so far as that cold and distant face could reveal an emotion. But one

evening in March, at a ball given by Metternich, he was seen to turn paler than ever. He had received news—troublesome, distracting news. It was evident that the cards would have to be reshuffled! Indeed, when he had imparted this surprising message there was an end of all debate and rivalry between the Powers, who during six months had quarrelled and bargained interminably. There was some question of war indeed. But not war among themselves.

The lion had got loose! Napoleon was in France.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

VAULABELLE: *Histoire des Deux Restaurations*, t. ii., iii., iv.
CHATEAUBRIAND: *Mémoires* (with Edmond Biré's notes), t. iii., vi.
EMILE BOURGEOIS: *Politique Etrangère*, t. ii.
TALLEYRAND: *Mémoires*, t. ii., iii.

CHAPTER V

THE HUNDRED DAYS

One day, at the Congress of Vienna (so the story goes), the statesmen there assembled were discussing anxiously the unrest in Italy, when Lord Wellington, seated beside a great round table on which was spread a map of Europe, cast his eyes negligently over the chart of Italy: "Good God! [he exclaimed]—how close Bonaparte is to the Italian coast! There will be no peace in Lombardy so long as he is at Elba."

Was it (as Savary, Duke of Rovigo, declares in his *Memoirs*) a foreign officer, an admirer of Napoleon, who left Vienna for Elba in order to tell the Emperor that the Allies contemplated moving him further afield? Was it the Prince Eugène, betraying the confidence of Alexander, who informed his step-father of a project in the air? The transportation of Napoleon was a theme so openly debated at Vienna that the news of it may have reached him from more sources than one. At any rate, it is certain that he believed in a plot either to assassinate him or to kidnap him on the part of the Allies; he had abducted so many persons himself that he knew the scheme might enter the sphere of practical politics. Was he to suffer the fate of the Duke of Enghien?

Napoleon had occupied the first months of his exile

in organizing Elba. He was there—like Prospero in his isle, like the prophet in his chamber on the wall—just on the marge of a world which he did not cease to survey.

But funds soon ran short. The yearly two millions of francs guaranteed by the Allies were never paid, for the canny King Louis XVIII took a malign pleasure in letting the ex-usurper taste the pleasures of poverty in exile: "*Chacun son tour!*" Napoleon had to borrow from a banker in Genoa the sum which permitted him to fortify his isle, place batteries along the coast, improve its artillery, and lay in a store of provisions and ammunition: the Allies and their press-gang should have no easy task! This occupied a week or two. Then time again began to drag. "My island is *very* small!" sighed the Emperor of Elba.

No news of wife or son. But his mother and the lovely silly sister he preferred came to keep him company. They brought news. News, indeed, percolated through from every quarter: how unpopular the Bourbons were; how the Allies meant to drive Murat from Naples; how Austria was regaining all the old ground in Italy; how France was as priest-ridden, the nobles as powerful, the people as dissatisfied as if the Revolution had never taken place: one-sided, inaccurate news enough; but it served to occupy and to infuriate the exile.

Meanwhile, in Milan the malcontents cried "*Vive l'Empereur!*" (and did not mean the Emperor of Austria), and in France they cried: "*Vive le Roi!*" (and added low: "*de Rome*").

On the 22nd of February, 1815, a certain M. Fleury de Chaboulon arrived in the island of Elba and had a long interview with Napoleon. The Emperor saw

him again on the morrow. This talk with Fleury was doubtless only the last drop that causes the vase to overflow. Napoleon was already at an end of his patience. The same impulsive temperament which had made him hurry on so many an event—rush into the hall at Saint-Cloud during the deliberation of the *Cinq-cents*, risk his life by his return from Egypt when he ran the blockade, gallop home so often from Spain or Russia on receipt of bad news—now sent him on a more tremendous quest before the times were ripe!

How mad an enterprise to dare, with the nine hundred men of his guard, the united armies of Europe, all still maintained on a footing of war and mobilized, when the nations assembled at Vienna had so many causes of quarrel among themselves as would supply half a dozen international conflicts! Had Napoleon known how to possess his soul in patience until his enemies were safely by the ears, he might yet have died a regnant monarch.

"Had I waited twelve hours longer [he said on Saint-Helena to Montholon], I should have been in possession of news which would have caused me to delay!" But his genius was of that sort which is not a long patience; Buffon's definition was not true for him. "Had I waited fifteen days, the news of my arrival would no longer have found the sovereigns all assembled in Vienna." But his nature was such that on the very morrow of that conversation with Fleury, in which he had fixed his departure for the 1st of April, he set sail for France with the nine hundred soldiers at his disposal, in the solitary gun-boat which composed his navy and three small trading vessels at anchor in the port. It was the 26th of February.

On the way they passed a French cruiser, that remarked nothing extraordinary in their trim. "How's the Emperor?" shouted the captain, seeing they hailed from his island (where there is a considerable trade in iron). Napoleon seized the speaking-tube: "Oh, he's all right!" he replied—"*Il va à merveille!*" His spirits and his hopes were high.

The sequel sounds like a page from the *Légende des Siècles:* the landing near Cannes and the bivouac in a garden of olives; the startled peasants hurrying to the scene and the village mayor who says reproachfully to Napoleon: "We were just beginning to enjoy our peace and quietness, and here you come to disturb and unsettle us again." ("Words," added the Emperor, "which pierced me to the heart.") And then the apparition of the courier of the Prince of Monaco who comes riding by in his gold-laced vest: Napoleon recognizes him as an old equerry of Josephine's, and inquires of him as to his probable chances. "The workmen and the soldiers are for you [says the horseman], but not the others, and don't count on Provence." In order to see how the land lies, the Emperor dispatches to Antibes five-and-twenty grenadiers under an officer, to announce his return and bid the garrison open their gates; but the time drags on, the grenadiers are seen no more of, being detained in prison at Antibes. Then comes the Prince of Monaco in person (astonished to find himself of so much importance *vis-à-vis* to Napoleon). "Where are you going?" "Home," said the little Prince. "So am I!" said Napoleon. His opinion asked, the Prince prophesies no easy triumph, but civil war, the people being for Napoleon, the governing and intellectual classes for the King. Then the Emperor leaves the plains, the

rich disaffected country, and takes to the mountains, making for Grenoble, the cradle of the Revolution. There he is received with enthusiasm; next at Lyons; and on the 20th of March, at four o'clock in the morning, just eleven months after his sad farewell to the Old Guard, he arrived at Fontainebleau. His nine hundred soldiers had not yet discharged a single rifle.

Until the middle of the month, the King in Paris had treated "B. P.'s" escapade with sovereign indifference. When the aerial telegraph brought to Paris the news of Napoleon's arrival in Provence, the King tossed aside the dispatch:

"Take this paper to the Minister of War and tell him to do what's necessary"—the necessary being evidently to set the madman against the nearest wall and order a platoon to fire.

"It's a plot," said the King—"It's a conspiracy," said the court. It would have been folly, they said, to feel the least uneasiness. Next thing, they heard Napoleon was at Lyons.

On the 15th of March, the King announced to the two Chambers that on the morrow he would communicate his intentions. A throne was prepared in the Palais Bourbon; the King, the royal family, the Marshals, the ministers, and the two Chambers were united. Louis XVIII arose, and in an affecting speech declared that he would gladly give his life to defend the Charter and the Constitution which at last had brought liberty to France: "*J'ai revu ma patrie. . . . J'ai travaillé au bonheur de mon peuple. . . . Pourrais je, à soixante ans, mieux terminer ma carrière qu'en mourant pour sa défense?*" These words were received with a storm of enthusiasm. The King and his brother embraced; the princes and the legislators cried as

with one voice: "We will live and die for the King and the Constitution!"

And no doubt Louis's instinct would have led him to stay in Paris, but his lymphatic, indifferent nature made him often the tool of his ministers. If he had stayed in Paris it is doubtful if Napoleon would have gained an entrance there. But those about the King thought too much of his safety and too little of his honour. After all, it was natural; Louis XVIII was the brother of the unhappy Louis Seize. So at midnight, on the 19th of March, the royal travelling coach drew up before the portal of the Pavillon de Flore; and the old King left the Tuileries, infirm and suffering sorely from his gout, leaning heavily on the arms of his ministers. The night was wild and wet; the rain fell in torrents; the wind extinguished the flaring light of the torches. Louis would have no escort; alone he set out in the darkness at the full speed of his equipage for Flanders, where he made a halt at Lille, and finally for the town of Ghent.

Twenty-four hours after this midnight flitting, Napoleon slept in the King's bed in Paris.

Thus, in twenty days' journey, without a shot fired, the Emperor exchanged his villa in Elba for the Tuileries. It is perhaps the most wonderful expedition in all history. But from the moment of his entry into Paris, Napoleon felt a certain chill fall across the quality of his greeting. Throughout the Hundred Days he was never completely sure of Paris. Under the Charter, Paris had tasted of liberty. The stifling despotism, the forced assent, the mailed fist of the Imperial Administration had been removed, and Paris —quick-witted, critical, sensitive, artistic Paris—had

breathed again and had soon accepted the Bourbons. What did it matter if they were a little ridiculous: the fat King in his red velvet gaiters; the awkward mannish Dauphine in her straight up-and-down white English frocks and unbecoming close bonnet? They were good honest folk who let a petulant city say its say. Paris had no great wish to go to school again.

In fact, the France of 1814 had two faces, like Janus, the one looking towards the Past, the other eagerly envisaging the Future. There was a popular, heroic France, the child of the Revolution, the heir of the Empire, patriotic to the innermost fibre of the soul, martial and simple, which was mortified to the quick by the invasion of the Allies. To this France Louis XVIII was odious.

But there was a new France whose eager appetites were not all for glory; a France which, after the huge interruption of the Revolution and the Empire, longed to resume the tasks and experiments in letters, in science, in industrial organization, which had occupied the middle years of Louis XVI. In 1814, the steamboat existed already in America; in 1814, George Stephenson was constructing his iron horse; in 1814, James Watt was elected a member of the Académie des Sciences in Paris. There was a France intensely occupied with spinning-jennies and chemical experiments, that dreamed of vast factories and the renewal of the world by organized industry. There was a France, voiced by Chateaubriand and Madame de Staël, that knew itself capable of a magnificent revival in art and literature, a France that felt itself the equal of the Classic Age, though so long curbed and stifled and silenced by the Empire. And this France dreaded

and hated Napoleon, because its ideal was beauty, culture, wealth, prosperity, and peace.

If sometimes this France had dreamed of a change of dynasty, it was not in favour of the Emperor. At most, the infant King of Rome, under a complacent Regency; better still, the Duke of Orleans, young Louis-Philippe, whom every one declared so charming, so wise, so Liberal. The sovereigns and statesmen assembled at Vienna were much of the same way of thinking; Louis XVIII was held to have disqualified himself by abandoning his kingdom in the hour of need. Besides, he had grievously offended the Tsar in 1814 by what Alexander deemed his Bourbon insolence: the autocrat of Russia had offered his sister as a bride for the heir of the French throne, and Louis had let him understand that the Romanoffs were people of no birth, that the Princess was a heretic, or at least a schismatic, and that there was madness in her family. Alexander was already considerably disenchanted when in the spring of 1815 he learned at Vienna that plan of Talleyrand's and King Louis's to found an alliance between England, France, and Austria—an alliance evidently intended to keep Russia in her proper place. Small wonder, then, if the Tsar envisaged a new arrangement of the monarchy in France. He inclined to the candidature of Louis-Philippe. Other Powers supported the King of Rome. As for Napoleon, all agreed that he was impossible.

Meanwhile the Emperor was making his last desperate bid for success. His eagles, which had flown from village spire to village steeple all the way from Cannes to the capital, had (as Chateaubriand puts it) fallen exhausted among the chimney-stacks of the Tuileries: Napoleon in Paris perceived that he was

no longer the idol of the nation. His one chance was to conciliate the malcontents of every party until, by some brusque act of power, he could bind them or fuse them in a party of his own. He went warily at first—much as he had pensively picked his path in politics on his return from Egypt—striving to accommodate the Imperialists of the army, the Republicans of the working class, and even those anarchists of every shade whom in his heart he held in horror. Soon—too soon, no doubt—he showed his hand. On the 23d of April he published an Additional Act to the Constitution of the Empire—an act which was in fact, under another name, the Charter of Louis XVIII. "Here [he seemed to say] am I, a constitutional monarch, quite reconciled with Liberty and Peace. Behold me at the head of a Parliamentary Government, perfectly ready to march with the times."

It was but a means of gaining time: the Emperor confessed in later years that, had Waterloo been a glorious victory for the French, he would soon have sent his Chambers to the rightabout. And even as an expedient it proved a poor tool. The patriots were disgusted; they had hoped for a Republic. The army was alarmed at this extension of the civil power. The Bonapartists deplored all these Liberal concessions and said Napoleon was growing old. And the Monarchists and the Liberals were neither convinced nor conciliated. The Emperor felt, with a sense of bewildered insecurity, that his magic worked no more; his old prestige had vanished.

Still, a great victory which should avenge France and redeem the long humiliation of the past year might renew the charm and re-establish the power. Napoleon was not without hope that he might yet

detach Austria and England from the circle of his enemies; he, too, had heard of that projected league, the last word of confidential diplomacy—and, like most such mysteries, the secret of Polichinelle: Punch's secret that everybody knows. To Austria, therefore, and to England he wrote, protesting his desire to keep the peace and his acceptance of the restricted frontiers of France. But neither Emperor nor King would take his word.

So then he must fight them all! And where was his army?

Louis XVIII had left the treasury full; not in vain had he practised a policy of peace and retrenchment. France is naturally so rich and so economical a country that, if her sovereigns will but leave her alone, she recovers, incredibly soon, from the most savage bleedings of her army surgeons. So, after one brief year of Louis's humdrum calm there was no lack of money. And neither would there be any lack of men, for every Frenchman is born a soldier, if time were granted to equip and train the troops. Napoleon reckoned that by the 1st of October he could place in the field an army of eight or nine hundred thousand men.

Unhappily for him, Europe was armed to the teeth: what a specially bad time he had chosen to come back! By the middle of May, Blücher was on the Meuse and Wellington on the Scheldt; the Russians were expected on the Rhine in June. And Lord Castlereagh was telling the Commons that, first and last, the Coalition could count on twelve hundred thousand soldiers. Already more than half of this number were ready to strike.

Napoleon had in hand between five and six hundred thousand, of which not half were fully armed,

instructed, and equipped; many were absent, in foreign garrisons; not two hundred thousand were in France, ready to take the field. And of these he had to detach 30,000 men to quell a new rising in Vendée. But could he wait? Could he let the enemy cross the frontier and begin over again the campaign in France?

It was clearly his best chance to beat the Prussians and the English before Austria and Russia were ready to take the field. Napoleon was a master of speed, secrecy, surprise. Notwithstanding the overwhelming numbers of the Allies, it was just possible that he might succeed: pouncing suddenly on the two adversaries, crashing right through their point of junction, falling on them, so to speak, with both fists and hammering hard till one fell stunned to the right and t'other to the left—this bold and brilliant plan was probably the best that a small, highly trained force could execute against two large but less coherent armies. But it needed the Napoleon of yesterday.

And Napoleon was no longer that. He had no longer the same force, the same passion, the same power of work. He had come back from Elba immensely fat, discursive, somnolent, oddly acquiescent in the slackness, the baseness, the faint-hearted treacheries of mediocre men. Things that would have driven him to fury in 1810 now scarce awoke a smile. He knew that Fouché was betraying him to his enemies, yet he found it convenient to retain Fouché as Minister of Police. He trusted very few, if any, of his Marshals: had they not all abandoned him? But he worked with them without reproach. His indulgence was infinite. In fact, Napoleon was growing old. He was in his forty-sixth year.

Nevertheless, in flashes the old genius illuminated

him still—the old unmatched decision, mastery, and brilliance. The sudden silent swoop with which he brought his armies across the frontier; the manner with which he arrayed this vast ambush—masked by low hills and the frontier fortresses—within a few leagues of an unsuspecting enemy, are worthy of his inspired campaigns. On the 14th of June, 1815, a hundred and fifteen thousand men, three hundred and fifty cannon, were drawn up, unrevealed, between Philippeville and Maubeuge, and if, on the morrow, the treason of General Bourmont revealed their presence to the Prussians, the English were still unprepared.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

Same as before, especially Vaulabelle, Chateaubriand, Rosebery, Fisher, Napoleon's *Letters*, *Memoirs* of Montholon, Gourgaud, Las Cases.

Henri Houssaye: *1815*.

CHAPTER VI

WATERLOO

In order to understand the fight at Waterloo, it is better, I think, not to have visited the field of battle, which I remember—forty years ago—as a pleasant rolling plain. Landscapes change, and here the cannon, the woodman's axe, the plough, have been at work. In 1815 all the country round Saint-Amand was so thick with trees that it appeared a forest when looked at from a distance: a land of bosky fields, deep lanes, and hidden villages, admirable as a cover for troops. These wide, wavy valleys, which follow each other like billows and rise to the forest of Soignes, appeared deeper far when their ridges were fringed with trees. It was through a wooded country that Napoleon crept invisible till, on the 16th of June, he fell on the Prussians just beyond Fleurus, as the panther springs on its prey.

His plan, as we know, was to attack the Allies at the point where their forces joined, to cut them in two, as one cuts through the waist of a hornet, to fling the British on Hal and the Prussians on Tongres, and then, rushing on Brussels, before they had recovered that first stunning blow, to throw the Germans beyond the Rhine and the English into the sea. After that the Emperor could reflect and determine what to do next. Ligny is the first act of Waterloo.

'Early in the morning on that 16th of June the cannon boomed three times in the direction of Fleurus. That deep salutation was succeeded by the strains of fife and drum, a great noise of singing, an endless acclamation, a prolonged roar which, as it approached Saint-Amand, resolved itself into the words "*Vive l'Empereur!*" The Prussians, hidden in the bosky hedges and orchards of the village, remained motionless, silent, until the first line of the French was seen nearing the church and the graveyard. Then the invisible Germans let loose, as from one rifle, a rolling fire of musketry. The French dashed on in a superb bound forward, and soon every barn, garden, outhouse was a scene of carnage, and men were knifing each other's ribs with unfixed bayonets in a struggle too close for rifle-fire, from the eaves to the cellars of every cottage in Saint-Amand.

This first day's fight could only be what it was: a thundering onset, a crashing attack, a position carried by decision and surprise. Blücher and his eighty thousand men were thrown back from Saint-Amand and Ligny, having suffered terrible losses. Their retreat left the English flank uncovered, and Wellington was forced to withdraw in good order on Waterloo.

The furious cannonade of Ligny had surprised the English. Wellington was not quick or ready: the battle of Waterloo is the battle of the hare and the tortoise. On the very day when Napoleon entered Belgium, Wellington was writing a long dispatch to the Emperor Alexander proposing a new plan of campaign for the invasion of France. Little did he dream that his enemy was already in the gate! On the eve of Ligny he still suspected nothing, and it was at the

Duchess of Richmond's ball in Brussels that the English Commander-in-Chief and his Staff learned the news of Napoleon's presence between Charleroi and Ligny. But which of us does not remember the scene in *Vanity Fair* and in the *Dynasts?*

Ligny, one of the most terrible battles of the century, was a victory for the French, and might have been a decisive victory, but for a lack of energy and coherence in the carrying out of Napoleon's command which was to have a sequel infinitely more important on the morrow. The French army, though it contained a great proportion of conscripts, had never been more ardent, braver. And Ney, Grouchy, Soult, d'Erlon, Girard, had fought victoriously on many a field beside their Emperor. What had robbed them now of their speed, their decision, their self-assurance, their certitude of victory? Was it the defeat and capitulation of 1814? Was it that they had, if not betrayed, at least abandoned, a year ago, their Emperor—their General of to-day?

Or was it the absence of Berthier, Prince of Wagram? Berthier was no thunderbolt of war, no genius. He was the administrator of the battlefield. He saw that the orders were clear, that they were duly carried, and in sufficient doubles that one officer or more shot down by the way need not stop communications between the centre and the wings. He was an admirable Major-General. Waterloo was perhaps lost by Napoleon for lack of the inconspicuous Berthier!

"*On a souvent besoin d'un plus petit que soi.*"

But Berthier, like the other Marshals, had capitulated to the Bourbons, and, on his master's sudden return, would not, like Soult and Ney, forsake the King for the Emperor, nor, like Marmont and Mac-

donald, immolate Napoleon to the Bourbon King. Inextricably torn between his honour and his conscience, Berthier had refused to take either part, and had retired to Bamberg, where on the 1st of June—just one fortnight before Waterloo—he had been mysteriously murdered by masked assassins. . . . On which side did his ghost call down vengeance?

Soult, who assumed Berthier's customary charge at Ligny and at Waterloo, was a General of rare military talent and a wise administrator, but one of those maundering, pedantic talkers who think any sharp, precise contour in speech incompatible with dignity. Instead of saying: "Send Erlon here! Bid Ney go there!" he indulged in generalities. Confusion was the result. General d'Erlon was sent from pillar to post, and during the whole arduous day at Ligny wandered up and down the battlefield, bringing his men to and fro, back and forth, between Napoleon and Ney, without placing them at the disposal of either. Worse still, acting on his own discretion in disobedience to orders, put off the attack on Quatre-Bras, where the Prince of Orange and Wellington were blocked with scarce eight thousand soldiers, until the Anglo-Belgians had time to bring up fifty thousand more. Worst of all was the inexplicable inaction of Grouchy, who, after prodigies of valour at Ligny, remained as it were stunned and passive during the two succeeding days. It was to this extraordinary attack of military paralysis that Napoleon himself attributed his defeat at Waterloo.

Thus it happened that, owing to inefficient staff-work, Napoleon had been obliged to fight at Ligny without Erlon's force—indeed, without a single man from Ney's command. The Prussians had been

forced to retreat, but they were not annihilated, as they should have been—indeed, they were not as "damnably mauled" as Wellington said and Napoleon supposed.

On the morning after Ligny the rain fell in torrents . . . perhaps some day our physicists will tell us why it always rains after a great artillery attack; so far they have either denied the circumstance or murmured something vague concerning the ionization of the clouds. Waterloo, at all events, was no exception to the rule. The roads were so deep in mire that it was impossible to move the artillery much before noon. Yet the whole problem for Napoleon was a question of time: could he get at the English before the remains of the Prussian forces had time to recover and come to their assistance? The great thing was to learn which road had been followed by the German General in that retreat, which was not (as Napoleon still hoped and supposed) a rout. Grouchy, with thirty-six thousand men, was told off to pursue the enemy and at all hazards to prevent his junction with the British. But Grouchy, after a march of five miles or so, stopped still, wasted all this day of the 17th. It is true the weather was so appalling that the troops in their rainsoaked clothes could barely move through the mud, and even when they moved could barely see.

Napoleon's chief fear was that the English would escape behind the forest of Soignies, or Soignes. But the English had no thought of escaping! Wellington massed his men solidly and squarely in front of the forest on the strong position of the Mont-Saint-Jean, a low eminence eleven miles south of Brussels. And there he waited. . . . Late on the evening of that

wasted day, the 17th, Napoleon paced his camp with the faithful Bertrand, turning in his mind many sombre thoughts and fears of a possible aggression of the Austrians from beyond the Rhine, when he saw, as he thought, a forest fire in the direction of Soignies. It was the bivouac of the British soldiers, who, under the pouring rain, were trying to dry their coats before their smoky fires of green wood hacked from the trees.

At five in the morning on the 18th of June a pale ray of sun lit up the sky, and the Emperor knew a gleam of joy: "We have eighty chances out of a hundred!" he exclaimed. But the roads were still too wet for the guns. The battle had to be put off until almost noon. Napoleon's plan was to throw himself with the full force of his right on the English left, hammer at them, and throw them off the Brussels road, while at the same time shutting off the chance of retreat through the forest of Soignies. On his extreme right Grouchy, with his thirty-six thousand men, was to keep off the Prussians and bring up a reserve if wanted. On the left, Reille was to attempt a diversion on the farm of Hougoumont, a little in advance of the British right.

Meanwhile Wellington awaited his attack. The decision to defend the Mont-Saint-Jean was taken upon the assurance of Prussian help. The British Commander had learned that Blücher's army was concentrated at Wavre, a large village which lies some thirteen miles north of the field of Waterloo, and that he might count on them to open on the French right somewhere about noon on the 18th.

Napoleon supposed the Prussians in full retreat to the east, harried in their rear by Grouchy's division. Had he suspected that ninety thousand Prussians

were within four hours' march, and proposed relieving Wellington in the course of the day, he would never have waited until thirty-five minutes past eleven in the morning before launching his attack on the Duke.

At one o'clock, as the Emperor on his mound swept the horizon with his field-glass in search of Grouchy's missing reserve, he saw a moving shadow. Not French! Prussians? Yes! Bülow's corps, who had not served at Ligny. It was, he thought, but a single unsupported body, which, if Grouchy moved rapidly, might be caught between two fires and annihilated. But Grouchy was not in sight, and these ominous Prussians—waiting and watching for the advent of Blücher's more considerable corps—hovered on the rear of the battle, still waiting, like a flock of vultures.

Perhaps at that moment Napoleon ought to have disengaged his armies, retreated (as Blücher had done at Ligny), left the ultimate issue for a happier hour. But was it possible? What reinforcements had he to hope for? Delay was all in favour of the Allies; *their* reinforcements were the innumerable hosts of Austria and Russia. Besides, the struggle was already begun: French and English were at each other's throats in an inextricable medley. The crashing charge of Erlon's division at one o'clock left the British infantry unshaken. Then came the turn of Milhaud and his cuirassiers. Who does not know the story of their splendid onset as they stormed the Mont-Saint-Jean, riding like centaurs—three thousand centaurs—three thousand grizzled heads shouting: "*Vive l'Empereur!*" Who has not heard how in the full shock of their furious charge they came on that sunken lane, the ravine of Ohain, and fell, one on the

top of another, in the horrible trap? But the middle ranks and the last gained the plateau on the further side, charging like mad, carrying all before them, the tails of their horses swishing through the tall wheat. Colonel Sourd, with six sabre-cuts in his right arm, dismounts while the army surgeon amputates it, and then leaps on his horse again and leads his men to the attack. "The Duke of Wellington told me himself [says Jomini in his *Campagne de 1815*]—he told me at Verona—that in all his experience of war he never saw anything more magnificent than the charge of the French cuirassiers at Waterloo."

At that moment it was to no French *confrère* that the Duke was imparting his impressions, but to the incomparable British infantry who withstood that wild onslaught: "Steady, boys [he says]; what will they say of us at home if we are beaten?" There was no thought of giving way—the English never know when they are beaten. The battle was won by men whose motto has ever been: "'Tis dogged as does it."

"The French cavalry was as close to us as our own troops," wrote the Iron Duke a little later to Lord Beresford. The moment came when the 5th British Division, reduced from four thousand to four hundred men, could no longer hold its position, and Wellington, seeing his brave soldiers hacked in pieces all round him, told them to fall where they stood, and never thought of yielding an inch of ground, though, as he sighed, "Night or Blücher alone can save us!"

Meanwhile, Napoleon was in no less terrible straits. Ney, mad with battle, had led his cavalry charge too soon—at half-past three; the exhaustion of the horses made a further attack appear as yet impossible, and the English cannon had found the range: there were

now great moth-eaten spaces and holes in the vast furry mass of the French busbies. . . . But the first British line is pierced, the second broken, though the third is intact. Oh, for a good, solid regiment of infantry! Ney sends to Napoleon in utmost haste:

"*De l'infanterie?* [the Emperor answers]. *Où voulez-vous que j'en prenne? Voulez-vous que j'en fasse?*"

And, just as Wellington scans the landscape for a sign of Blücher, he looks anxiously round: still no trace of Grouchy and his men! They might have disappeared in an earthquake! But the army does not yet guess at the Emperor's anguish. . . . The French soldiers had begun to cry "*Victoire!*" A messenger was riding post haste to Ghent to apprise Louis XVIII of the defeat of the Allies, when that cloud on the horizon began to move. The men cried: "*Grouchy!*" But the Emperor knew better. It was the Prussian army, under Bülow!

In order to win the battle he must, at whatever cost, crush the British before the arrival of Blücher, who was probably somewhere in Bülow's rear. The mass of the French cavalry, twelve thousand strong, flung itself again in charge after charge on the English front, carrying at last the English guns and sweeping with desperate bravery round the unbroken squares whose fire thinned their ranks. Those indomitable squares remained unshaken! Never has greater courage been displayed, either in attack or in endurance. The rivals were equally matched; for if either was to overcome, some new factor must be added to his strength.

At half-past six, again that moving shadow on the sky-line! And again the soldiers of France shouted: "Grouchy! Grouchy!"

But it was the bulk of the Prussian army, under Blücher.

Then the Imperial Guard, Napoleon's last reserve, which had taken no part in the battle, was drawn up in two huge columns of attack. Ney himself led the first—a Ney transfigured, drunk with battle and despair, covered with mud (he had been thrown from his horse), his coat pierced with bullets, his sleeve torn from the shoulder: a Ney wild, gesticulating, shouting "*Vive l'Empereur!*" And the column, sweeping all before it, floundering through heavy fields and pools of water, mounted the rise, touched the English front, and fell back, torn, shattered, by the terrible charge of the British musketry. Then broke the second wave, advancing with the same fury, rising, engulfing—only to be repulsed and scattered in its turn.

By now it was nine in the evening: night began to fall. All these brave men had been fighting for three days. And at the moment when the Guard fell back exhausted, the French beheld the whole Prussian army massed on Napoleon's right, their guns sweeping the road to Charleroi. Wellington seized that moment to make a desperate advance: those imperturbable, shattering squares began to move forwards; all round the French now saw themselves hemmed in by those rows on rows of little red figures, no taller than low hedges, which were the British regiments and divisions; and the troops of the Emperor saw that they were turned. From that hour all was lost. Terror, panic, confusion reigned in the ranks of the French; whole regiments fled helter-skelter in a wild *sauve-qui-peut.*

But the Emperor's Old Guard still stood firm, in the midst of the increasing darkness. "Surrender!"

cried the British, in a transport of pity and admiration. "Damn!" screamed the French General, Cambronne (for thus I venture to translate the unpronounceable oath which polite historians have paraphrased as "The Guard dies, but does not surrender"), and with a last cry: "*Vive l'Empereur!*" the heroic grenadiers rushed headlong on their death. . . .

Napoleon was looking on in a sort of stupor. "They seem to have broken the ranks?" he muttered, as he saw his squadrons tumbling head over heels in their mad rout. "All was lost [he was to write on the morrow] by a moment of panic terror, and [he added with the indulgence of a great captain] *on sait ce que c'est que la plus brave armée du monde lorsqu'elle est mêlée et que son organisation n'existe plus.*" The very soldiers at his side were caught in the whirlpool and swept away in that hopeless torrent. Then the Emperor gathered up his reins and, turning his horse, made for the sacrificed phalanx of the Guard and would have entered their column. But Soult, Duke of Dalmatia, laid his hand on the bridle: "Stop, Sire! Are not our enemies happy enough already?"

Napoleon resists, and is wise to resist, for that would have been his fitting end. But Soult and the Generals drag him on the road to Genappe. There for a long moment he sits his horse, silent, motionless, deeply brooding; then orders an artilleryman to fire off his guns, and listens, for the last time, to that dull roar which has been the music of his life; at last he gives his bridle-rein a shake and sets off alone at full canter for Charleroi.

On the 21st of June he was in Paris. He had been three days without eating; he was worn out. He had no longer the courage to daunt and dominate

the Chambers: "*Ah, mon cher, j'étais battu.*" He was no longer the man of Brumaire, and when both Houses demanded his abdication, he was too broken to resist. Lavalette, his Postmaster-General, has left a record of the "fearful epileptic laugh" with which Napoleon greeted him on that 21st of June. The Emperor saw the game was up. Outside in the streets the people and the soldiers—two regiments and a mob from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine—were shrieking, adjuring him not to desert them, beseeching him to lead them against the enemy. Napoleon remained passive, inert. If there was one thing he adored even more than Power it was Order. He was afraid of Civil War, of Revolution. On the 22nd he signed his abdication in favour of his son, the King of Rome. He then offered the Provisional Government to serve France as a simple General under their command. The Government refused. Finally, as Blücher's Prussians were reported in the neighbourhood, he left Paris and made his way to the sea.

His first idea had been to take refuge in those United States of America which were a second fatherland to the children of the Revolution. But the British cruisers scoured the Atlantic. So, making a virtue of necessity, the tracked and hounded autocrat of yesterday wrote to the Prince Regent announcing that "he came, like Themistocles, to seat himself at the hearth of the British people." Ah, why did not the English State, in a mood of generous and judicious irony, offer him that vacant Hall of Hartwell where Louis XVIII had passed his term of exile? Instead, as we know to our grief and shame, we stranded him on a sunbaked Devil's Island in mid-ocean, on desolate, dreary Saint-Helena. That and the flaming

stake at Rouen are our two crimes in History; we have had our own way of dealing with the heroes and heroines of France! And I think it took the blood we shed of late in Flanders to wipe out the memory of that offence.

Not like Themistocles, received with magnificence in Persia by the nobler adversaries of the elder age. Like Philoctetes, rather, left to perish on his lonely rock.

In the twenty-year-long contest between the Revolution and Europe, the Dynasts score the final triumph. In France, in Spain, in Naples, the Bourbons re-ascend their thrones.

Louis XVIII comes limping home to France, crutched on the armies of the Coalition; twelve hundred thousand foreign troops again overrun the departments, leaving behind them, when they retire—as a flood-tide leaves its fringe of mud and weed—an army of occupation, a hundred and fifty thousand foreigners, as a sort of Royal Guard destined to secure the King against a renewal of Revolution. The cost of their maintenance was added to the war-tax of seven hundred millions of francs contributed by France to the expenses of the campaign. The insolent, irrepressible country appeared ruined, at least, if not reconciled.

But military force has never yet been able to long prevent the expansion of a great political ideal, and the task of the nineteenth century in France was to be the gradual and sure development of the notion of democracy.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

Same as before.

ADOLPHE THIERS: *Waterloo.*

EPILOGUE

Not since Henry VI of England was crowned King of France in Notre Dame had the great nation suffered a humiliation so entire as during that Conference of the Allies which occupied Paris during the summer of 1815, in order to arrange the future of Europe and to assume the government of France. The defeat of 1814 had been nothing compared to this complete abasement. France lay prone—while her enemies yelped and bayed about her, each eyeing some juicy, tender morsel to set its fangs in, snatch asunder, and carry to its lair unreproved.

The leanest States were the hungriest and the most pitiless: Prussia and the Germans, greedy beyond all bounds. Nothing was too small for them—they stripped the walls of the public picture galleries; they threatened to blow up the Iéna bridge, memorial of their defeat ("Do as you will," said Louis XVIII; "I warn you, I shall have myself carried on to the bridge in my armchair"); and no project for the dismemberment of France appeared to them preposterous. They would fain have had the kingdom occupied for the space of seven years by an army of two hundred and forty thousand men; they wanted a war indemnity of twelve hundred millions; they claimed French Flanders, Alsace, Lorraine, Savoy, Burgundy, Franche-Comté, part of Champagne, and

part of Dauphiné. They wished to separate from the mother-country some four million seven hundred and sixty thousand souls; and, naturally, they required the fortresses: Dunkirk, Lille, Metz, Strasburg, Besançon, Chambéry, at least. The very spirit of destruction possessed them.

Austria, indifferent, well-bred, looked on, mildly disapproving this excess of Prussian cupidity. For her own part, she was less exacting, proposing merely a return to the historical frontiers of 1790, an indemnity of six hundred millions, and the dismantling of the first line of French defences in Flanders and Alsace. Yet she did nothing to oppose the hungrier despoilers —hypocritically benign, secretly not a little ferocious, as is the wont of Austria.

The unhappy King of France could do nothing. These furies who spoke of dismembering his kingdom were the Allies who had restored his throne. In its secret sessions the Conference had drawn up a map of France—of the miserable remnant left when all these avidities should be satisfied. Such mysterious meetings are never so occult as their members imagine. Somehow, their dim arcana are generally violated: a copy of the map came into the hands of the old King, sitting forlorn, unfriended, in his Tuileries. Louis XVIII, whatever were his faults, never failed in dignity: he sent for the Duke of Wellington, for the Emperor Alexander. He spoke first to the conqueror of Waterloo:

"My Lord Duke, I thought on my return to France to reign over the kingdom of my forefathers; it seems that I was mistaken. Will your Government, my lord, grant me a refuge if, for the second time, I ask the hospitality of England?"

The impulsive Alexander left the Duke no time to answer:

"No! No! Your Majesty shall not lose those provinces. I will not suffer it!"

From that moment—perhaps before, else why did the wise old King send especially for those two representatives of his Allies?—but at any rate, certainly, from that moment France in her extremity saw two unexpected angels, two miraculous champions, detach themselves from the rout of her oppressors and stand by her side. They were Alexander and Wellington. At first they were much more Alexander and Wellington than Russia and England, but that was to follow.

Alexander was an autocrat who summed up in his person all the Russias; but Wellington (and Castlereagh) had some difficulty and some merit in bringing the English at home round to their point of view. In their chivalrous action, as in Alexander's, there was more than the magnanimity that met the eye.

The character of Alexander of Russia is one of the most interesting in modern history. Only a mystic could be at once so dreamily high-minded and so alertly practical; so ingenuous and so shrewd a calculator; so noble and so full of guile. Alexander was the Saint Francis-Xavier of nineteenth-century politics—more spiritualized than ever in 1815, being under the influence of Madame de Krüdener and pledged to further the reign of Christ on earth. But, for the last year, he had looked with suspicion on the new importance of Prussia—of Germany: France, bounding these countries upon their further side, would be an incomparable ally for the government

of the Tsar. In the east, also, France might prove, for Russia, an excellent counterpoise to the influence of Great Britain. No; from every point of view, moral or mundane, it was clear that conquered France must not be too much enfeebled.

Wellington and Castlereagh, meanwhile, were ruminating thoughts not wholly dissimilar. England, too, might want one day a friend in need, and who so handy as a neighbour? Especially did they dread too close an alliance between France and Russia.

"The principal arguments of Castlereagh [wrote Gagern, the representative of the Netherlands] are the necessity of keeping Russia within bounds, for Russia has a kindness for France, and tends to an alliance, while England seeks to outlive her in generosity and moderation."

Mais il y a la manière. Alexander spoke from an impulse of the heart no less than from a deep political calculation. He had never forgotten those words of Talleyrand's at Erfurt: "The French nation is civilized . . . the sovereign of Russia is civilized. . . . Let the Emperor of Russia be the ally of the people of France." Alexander felt a moral duty of protection towards the French, and in his then mood of Vicar of Christ on earth we may suppose that he regarded the distressful country as his lost sheep, whom he would bring back to the fold on his shoulder. After all these years the accents of his arguments are moving, as he complains of the Germans who degrade the cause of the Allies by their violence and their vengeance, their unmannerly avarice, their pretensions to Alsace and Lorraine—"*Les Alsaciens répugnent à devenir Allemands.*"

"I entirely share your Majesty's opinion as to the extravagant character of the Prussian proposals," chimed in the Duke of Wellington.

The Duke's task was not light, for, as I have said, he had to convert his Government at home, and above all to sway and manage that tremendous force, the British public, inclined to look on the French as a sort of Catholic heathen, little better than cannibals in manners and morals. "Take something," wrote Lord Liverpool. Wellington took as little as he could —filched a few works of art, and that with so bad a grace that he set the French against him while he barely calmed the folk at home; but, in essentials, no less than Alexander, he stood the friend of France. "*L'Angleterre ne veut pas qu'il arrive de mal à la France,*" complains the German diplomatist, Gneisenau, in a letter to the poet Arndt, and he scarce knows what to argue from "*une pareille perversité.*" But Wellington stood firm. He had not Alexander's mystical magnanimity, but he had a sportsman's liking for fair play, a soldier's fellowship for the adversary he had found it so hard to beat, a gentleman's dislike for the avarice of the Germans. Both he and Castlereagh wrote to Lord Liverpool that the prosperity of France was England's advantage.

Thanks to England and Russia, France was not dismembered. She lost but a recent acquisition, Savoy, and a few frontier fortresses, not of the first rank— these last, which were French since Louis Quatorze, being cruel sacrifices.

Still, mauled and mulcted, France was left alive, with all her limbs and all her faculties, organically perfect. Here let me quote again that verse of Ronsard's which I have printed on my second flyleaf:

Le Gaulois semble au saule verdissant:
Plus on le coupe et plus il est naissant,
Et rejetonne en branches davantage,
Prenant vigueur de son propre dommage.

The Gaul is like the verdant willow-bush:
The more you prune, the more it's lithe and lush,
Shooting a crown of branchy twigs all round,
And draws new life and vigour from a wound.

We know what life, what vigour, our pruned laurel, France, was to find in the nineteenth century—in Art, in Letters (for, just as we take leave of her, the first Romantics arrive on the horizon), in Science, too, with Lamarck, Le Verrier, Claude Bernard, Pasteur, and the rest; in Industry, in Social Science—and also in politics, tending ever more and more, as her history evolves, to that alliance which was foreshadowed more than a hundred years ago, in the tragic Paris of 1815.

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